



The Mind-Body Politic

Michelle Maiese
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Preface

A few months ago, Michelle asked her students, on the first day of their Fall Semester class on “Theories of Human Nature,” to consider their *level of agreement* with respect to a series of claims about human nature and motivation. The four corners of her classroom were labeled “Strongly Agree,” “Agree,” “Disagree,” and “Strongly Disagree.” As she read out each claim, students moved to different parts of the classroom. Some topics were more controversial than others. When it came to God and gender, for example, views were highly mixed. Some students indicated their strong belief that in order to gain a better understanding of human nature, we need to talk about God, whereas others said that they thought God was irrelevant. Some students expressed their belief that human nature did not vary according to biological sex, whereas others said they believed that there were inborn differences between men and women.

One topic, however, attracted widespread agreement: “In their natural state, humans are fundamentally competitive and self-interested.” At this point in the class, almost all of the students were huddled together under the “strongly agree” or “agree” labels. When asked to explain why they agreed, several students cited our human drive to survive, and also added that their primary reasons for attending college were to compete in the workforce and advance their own interests.

A few of them lingered in the center of the classroom, which Michelle had designated as a space for those who were uncertain. One of the

students said she thought that parents sometimes exhibited genuine self-sacrifice, but then a student who “strongly agreed” with the statement expressed a classical Hobbesian view nowadays called “psychological egoism”: she asserted that all human choice and action are inherently self-interested and that even behavior that *appeared* altruistic was in fact motivated, at bottom, by self-interest.

Why are so many of us convinced that this Hobbesian view is true? And why is it that whenever contemporary college or university professors query students about their reasons for pursuing post-secondary education, they begin to describe their future career plans without missing a beat? Why do other concerns—such as becoming a more informed voter or a more engaged citizen; gaining knowledge about social injustice; being able to think more critically about politics and current events; pursuing a morally good life; or crafting a meaningful philosophy of life—so rarely even *get mentioned*?

To be sure, these concerns have not *completely* disappeared from the lives of people under the age of 40. Look, for example, at the sharp rise in interest in *democratic socialism* and *social anarchism* (aka *anarcho-socialism*) displayed by millennials since the Occupy movement in the late 00s, and especially since The Age of Trump-POTUS began in 2016. However, it’s clear that the *main* focus of these current students lies elsewhere, namely on their future career prospects. As a result, their natural curiosity and love of learning for its own sake, or for the sake of other higher intrinsic values like “living a good life” or “living a meaningful life,” has greatly diminished, and many even view their university education as nothing but a burden that they must endure. It’s something that they *have to do*, and that they *dread*, as part of the obligatory pathway to “gainful employment.” They resent being told that it’s a privilege or that they are lucky to be in college or university. Even those few who retain their love of learning for its own sake, or who still think about living a morally good life or crafting a meaningful life-philosophy, come to view their stint in higher education in largely instrumental terms, as nothing but a means to an end.

For many or even most of them, the very idea of making carefully thought-out choices about which academic programs to pursue, in light of their unique interests and passions, is largely irrelevant; above all, they

think they need to follow a path that will lead them to a comfortable middleclass or upper-middleclass lifestyle. Subjects like philosophy, which offer no such clear path to this goal—or even worse, which may seem to offer only a long and winding road *away* from this goal—take on an air of futility, or at best, of mystery. “What can you *do* with a degree in philosophy?” students and administrators alike frequently ask. And if a professor replies that someone can do *anything* after majoring in philosophy, people are likely to be deeply dissatisfied with this response. Whereas philosophy once was thought to play a crucial role in critical, reflective self-knowledge and in educating people for their role as citizens, today’s all-encompassing emphasis on economic “innovation” and competitiveness, *as an inevitable feature of human life*, can make studying or pursuing philosophy seem like an utter waste of time and effort. Unfortunately, and not surprisingly, many colleges and universities are responding to this “crisis in the humanities” by cutting back, or even eliminating, their philosophy programs.

According to this way of thinking, going to college or university is just for *professional advancement* and *landing a “good” job*, and even more distressingly, it’s not *only* the students who think so. During professional academic faculty and administrative meetings, there is all-too-frequent talk about “competitor schools,” “value for the money,” “sustainability,” and the need for “a return on investment.” Educational “outcomes” increasingly are defined and assessed in relation to what sort of job undergraduate students have obtained one to five years after graduation. At tuition-driven liberal arts colleges, in particular, professors and administrators need to be very skillful at gauging the level of student interest in various subjects, and tailoring their curriculum to whatever the students say they want. There is a demand to “market” their courses, their departments, and their colleges and universities, so that students will show up in sufficient numbers and they won’t have to close their doors. The sad and even tragic fact is that at most contemporary institutions of higher education, a department’s “performance” is measured solely by the number of undergraduate majors and graduates, the total number of students enrolled in courses, the number of graduate students who get professional academic jobs, the number of publications produced by faculty members, and discipline-wide rankings.

Perhaps most sadly or tragically of all, many contemporary professional academic faculty members actually *embrace* this way of thinking with enthusiasm, unabashedly speaking *not* about the intrinsic value of their subject, but instead about how their programs will “increase enrollments,” tap into new “markets,” or provide significant career preparation, thereby satisfying all-important “learning outcomes.” These trends are so pervasive and prominent, in fact, that even those professional academic *philosophers* who deeply resent and want to resist this market-driven orientation, also feel a strong need, when pushed into a corner, to defend themselves in terms of the very thing they most despise, in their heart of hearts; that is, they are driven to assert that studying or pursuing philosophy is, in fact, *great preparation for getting a good job*. Recently, one of Michelle’s friends and colleagues told her that, given economic pressures surrounding student loans, high rates of unemployment, and stagnating wages in many fields, *we have no choice* but to adopt a capitalist, market-driven orientation.

No doubt the economic pressures are real; but it appears that many of us have adopted this view of higher education rather unthinkingly or wholeheartedly, not as a regrettable response to economic realities, but rather as the “natural” way to view the world. Such observations indicate that a new and pervasive kind of social reality has emerged, one in which every aspect of human life is managed and evaluated in relation to market demands. Market logic now prevails in higher education, and many professors now understand the university’s role in society primarily in relation to capitalist economic imperatives. Other sorts of values that might be associated with a higher education, such as developing a capacity for critical inquiry, civic engagement, and the interrogation of the fundamental assumptions and values of one’s society, have begun to fade from sight. Aristotle’s claim that knowledge of the world around us is good for its own sake, regardless of its instrumental usefulness, and Kant’s even bolder claim that we should dare to think and know for ourselves—*Sapere aude!*—not only for its own sake, but also for the sake of “the highest good” of rational, moral, and political *enlightenment*, have come to seem virtually incomprehensible to many. Even those of us who agree with Aristotle or Kant are likely to find, upon honest self-critical reflection, that we all-too-frequently view our teaching and scholarship primarily as

a means to an end—to get promoted, publish our work in high-status journals, gain professional prestige and higher salaries, and perhaps even become a *professional academic philosophy superstar*.

But why has this market orientation become so dominant and widespread? Why do we think that the *economic* dimension of life is both fundamental and inevitable? And is it true that *we have no choice* but to adjust our thoughts, affects, and actions accordingly? Not surprisingly, the causes and deeper explanation lie in the larger “real world” outside the professional academy. More precisely, we strongly believe that these attitudes are largely the result of a larger, worldwide moral, political, and economic ideology known as “neoliberalism” (also known as “neoconservatism” or “centrism”). In the USA, in particular, this insidious set of ideas, values, and assumptions began to take hold in the late 1970s, became widespread in the 1980s, and increasingly has been guiding our thought and action ever since.

On this neoliberal view of things, economic efficiency is the highest value, capitalist market considerations always take priority, and market-interference or regulations should be avoided wherever possible—except, of course, whenever *protectionist* policies are deemed necessary for cornering a market and making a profit. Needs formerly met by public agencies, or via government provision, or through personal relationships in communities and families, are now supposed to be met by private companies selling services. Neoliberalism in its specifically democratic guise emphasizes the values of individualism, self-reliance, consumerism, and personal gain; and these market values significantly determine what we regard as rational and responsible forms of human agency. It is considered “rational and responsible,” for example, to focus on increasing one’s own “human capital,” and downright *irrational* and *irresponsible* to engage in either short-term activities or life-pursuits that are not valued in the marketplace. “Success” consists essentially in having a nice home, a fancy car, stylish clothing, lots of extra money to spend on brief, furtive holidays and trendy leisure, and a large and ever-increasing number of followers on social media. And then personal and collective happiness are assumed to flow directly from such “success.”

This way of thinking has become so customary and widespread that one can rightly say it is now part of our cultural everyday *common sense*.

It is deeply embedded in the workings of various social institutions, including the health care system, the educational system, and the political system. It fundamentally guides political discourse and action, heavily influences pop culture, and shapes our various modes of social interaction. It is so all-pervasive and ingrained, in fact, that, like white noise, it all-too-often escapes detection. What is more, even though it continues significantly to determine how we think, feel, and behave, we rarely stop to ask whether its influence is beneficial or harmful.

In *The Mind-Body Politic*, we use fundamental ideas in the *philosophy of mind* in order to formulate and defend the thesis that the influence of neoliberal ideology is largely *destructive and deforming*, and that it prevents us from fulfilling our true human needs. Instead of motivating us to seek work that we love and find inherently meaningful and self-sustaining—call it *lifework*—it prompts us to seek out careers with the highest pay check and/or highest social status, even if they are what David Graeber has aptly dubbed “bullshit jobs”—namely, jobs that are basically meaningless and unproductive, even though they may pay very well and/or look impressive on our *Curriculum Vitae* and resumes. Rather than promoting intimate human relationships, empathy, solidarity, and collective action as inherently good and meaningful, neoliberalism primes and encourages mutual antagonism, egoism, “winner-takes-all” competition, “networking,” and endless, robotic efforts to increase our “social capital.”

Part the reason why this ideology has become so dominant and pernicious is that it is so all-pervasive. Like white noise, or the air we breathe, it generally escapes our self-conscious notice and therefore also hides from our critical scrutiny: it has become so commonplace that many of us simply cannot even *imagine* things otherwise. And like racism, sexism, ableism, xenophobia, and other rationally unjustified and immoral ideologies and practices that violate *human dignity* and *oppress* people, it all-too-frequently remains hidden from critical consciousness and popular consciousness alike. But how can a set of ideas, attitudes, and practices become so dominant that it turns into white noise, even as it continues to *harm us* in fundamental ways?

The short-and-snappy version of the answer we are offering in this book is: because these ideas, attitudes, and practices *are realized in social institutions*, and because *social institutions literally shape our minds*, very

often without any self-conscious awareness whatsoever of their influence on the part of the people affected. Furthermore, we believe that this process of mind-shaping is as much emotional and bodily as it is cognitive and intellectual, and that social institutions exert their formative influence by cultivating a specific *affective orientation*. We begin with the commonsense observation that social relationships and norms have a powerful *molding effect* on the human mind. From our earliest days, we look to other people for approval and recognition. Our caregivers direct our attention to various objects, we mimic their facial expressions and gestures, and we learn how to use tools by watching others use them. Over the course of learning and socialization, we acquire various bodily skills and habits that allow us to engage effectively with our surroundings. Through our embodied interactions with others, we also develop characteristic attitudes and affective stances and particular ways of interpreting objects and events. Over time, we gain a feel for the “rules of the game” associated with various social contexts and deepen our understanding of how we are expected to behave. Once we have *internalized* various social norms and rules, we can function more effectively in various social settings without having to pause and think about what to do next. These ingrained patterns of feeling, thought, and behavior shape our sense of what is possible and appropriate and comprise our habitual ways of understanding ourselves and our world. But at the same time, the habits of mind that have been cultivated via the rules, laws, and basic structures of social institutions take on a socially-created existence and life of their own and make it difficult for us to feel, think, and act otherwise. Ultimately, then, the many social institutions that we belong to literally shape our minds, and thereby fundamentally affect our lives, for worse or better.

In order to escape from the social institutions that shape people’s minds *for the worse*, and in order to build new social institutions that shape people’s minds *for the better*, we need to gain a deeper understanding of the complex, multifaceted, psychological and social dynamics at play. How do social norms and cultural values mold our feeling, thought, and behavior? How does inhabiting a particular social institution shape the way that we selectively attend to and interpret our surroundings, focusing on some considerations while ignoring others? What is it about social

interaction and the influence of other people's emotions, desires, and expectations that exerts such a strong influence over us?

After an Introduction that's intended to provide the reader with a general theoretical and practical orientation for understanding our philosophical project, we move onto an examination of the mind-shaping influence of contemporary neoliberal social institutions that overtly or covertly coerce and mentally enslave us. Here we hope to shed philosophical light on how this big-capitalist market orientation has become so influential, how it has modified people's outlooks and actions, and how it impedes and undermines human flourishing, self-realization, and solidarity. In particular, we will discuss how this way of viewing the world has infiltrated higher education and mental health practice, so much so that those who belong to these institutions frequently adopt this perspective as if it's just a matter of common sense.

Then we proceed to describe what we take to be the central features of constructive, enabling social institutions that cultivate our capacities for autonomy and empathy, and radically liberate us. And finally, we offer substantive suggestions about how we can begin to create and sustain these emancipatory social institutions. Transformative education, we believe, not only *can be* but also *should be* life-changing and world-changing, and thereby can serve as a model for emancipatory social institutions more generally. This in turn expresses our radical "philosophy of philosophy," which unabashedly asserts it to be a critical and reflective enterprise that is at once intellectual, practical, essentially embodied, and fully affective.

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1

Introduction: Political Philosophy of Mind

In Meditation XVII of his “Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions,” John Donne poetically and correctly described a fundamental aspect of the human condition:

No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as any manner of thy friends or of thine own were; any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind. And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee. (Donne 1624, Meditation XVII).

In other words, human beings are, necessarily, *social* beings. They both influence, and are influenced by, other people as well as social institutions more generally. But as C. Wright Mills so aptly noted in his breakthrough 1956 study of institutional structures and power-relations in the USA, *The Power Elite*:

The kind of moral and psychological beings men become is in large part determined by the values they experience and the institutional roles they are allowed and expected to play.... Although men sometimes shape institutions, institutions always select and form men. (Mills 1956/2000, pp. 15 and 123, texts joined)

And as Jan Slaby and Shaun Gallagher have recently noted:

[T]he notion of a cognitive institution is itself a helpful tool for developing a critical stance that allows us to scrutinize current institutional practices. Critique here takes the form of assessments of an institution's modes of operation and de facto impacts, analyzed against the background of its official and unofficial aims, purpose and directions. How does the operational reality of an institution and its specific effectiveness measure up to the ideas and principles that have led to its creation? On a more general level, critique also implies asking whether some given institutional procedures improve (or impede, or distort) our understanding, our communicative practices, our possibilities for action, our recognition of others, our shared and circumscribed freedoms, and so forth. (Slaby and Gallagher 2014, p. 6)

So, in a nutshell: human beings are, necessarily, social animals (Donne); but although people “sometimes shape institutions, institutions always select and form” people (Mills); and “the notion of a cognitive institution is itself a helpful tool for developing a critical stance that allows us to scrutinize current institutional practices” (Slaby and Gallagher 2014, p. 6).

Starting out with those basic ideas, and then adding some of our own, we do two things in *The Mind-Body Politic*. First, we work out a new critique of contemporary social institutions, by deploying the special standpoint of the philosophy of mind, and in particular, the special standpoint of the philosophy of what we call *essentially embodied minds*. And second, we make a set of concrete, positive proposals for radically changing both these social institutions and our essentially embodied lives, for the better.

More specifically, we undertake a deeper, generalized, and explicitly political critical analysis of essentially the same set of social-institutional phenomena pointed up by Donne, Mills, and Slaby and Gallagher, from

the standpoint of the philosophy of mind, and also updated to the second decade of the twenty-first century. Our particular focus is social institutions encountered by people living in contemporary neoliberal nation-states, insofar as those people are also essentially embodied minds, and specifically insofar as these social institutions select, form, and literally shape the conscious, self-conscious, affective, cognitive, and agential minds of those people. But this mind-shaping, and its correspondingly fundamental effects on our lives, can be for *worse* or for *better*. We argue that in contemporary neoliberal nation-states, standard social institutions mind-shape us and fundamentally affect us radically for *the worse*—hence they are, to that extent, dystopian—but also that a careful critical analysis of this unhappy phenomenon enables us to formulate a positive theory of individual and collective social-institutional change that is radically for *the better*.

Clarity and distinctness—appropriately scaled to the inherent difficulty/simplicity and murkiness/lucidity of one’s subject-matter, of course—are leading philosophical virtues, so we will start by defining some terms we will use frequently in what follows. For our purposes, a *social institution* is any group of people whose subjective experiences, feelings and emotions, thoughts, and intentional actions are collectively guided and organized by shared principles or rules that function as *norms*—that is, evaluative standards, ideals, codes of conduct, and/or imperatives—for that group. By *democracy*, we mean any social institution that is governed by the rule of the majority of people qualified to vote, who in turn elect or appoint a minority of those people to “represent” and govern them.¹ And by *neoliberalism*, we mean the political doctrine that combines:

- i. *classical Hobbesian liberalism*, according to which people are essentially self-interested and mutually antagonistic, hence require a coercive central government to ensure their mutual non-interference and individual pursuit of self-interested goals,
- ii. *the valorization of capitalism*, especially global corporate, worker-exploiting, technocratic capitalism (aka “big capitalism”), and

- iii. *technocracy*, the scientifically-guided control and mastery of human nature and physical nature alike, for the sake of pursuing individually and collectively self-interested ends.

In our contemporary world, the basic elements of neoliberalism in big-capitalist, democratic nation-states also smoothly implicitly generalize to “neoconservatism,” “centrism,” and even to “state capitalism” in state-socialist or other non-democratic nation-states. Of course, there are superficial variations in political rhetoric and ideology. However, underneath all these superficial variations are the basic elements just mentioned: classical Hobbesian liberalism (and the corresponding view that humans are essentially self-interested and mutually antagonistic), the valorization of capitalism, and technocracy. This is what we are calling “neoliberalism.”

What Henry Giroux (2002) rightly describes as “the dystopian culture of neoliberalism” emphasizes market-based values, relationships, and identities, and defines individual and social agency through big-capitalist, market-oriented notions of individualism, competition, and consumption. In all contemporary neoliberal nation-states *worldwide*, every one of us belongs to, participates in, or falls under the jurisdiction of, a multiplicity of different social institutions, many of them overtly or covertly neoliberal and dystopian, and all of them overlapping and interrelated in complex ways, for example:

- families
- churches or other spiritual organizations, including cults
- schools of all kinds, including higher education and social arrangements involving research in the humanities and the sciences
- clubs or teams of all kinds
- social arrangements involving sports, leisure, and exercise activities of all kinds
- jobs and workplaces
- social systems for the production of material goods of all kinds
- social systems for the provision of services of all kinds
- economic social systems more generally, including banking systems and other monetary systems

- consumer social systems of all kinds
- medical social systems of all kinds, including social arrangements involving mental or physical health, especially hospitals and other care facilities, and social arrangements surrounding dying and death
- social arrangements involving the internet, the telephone system, the postal system, and other communication systems
- social arrangements involving the fine arts, performances and aesthetic appreciation, and crafts
- mass entertainment social systems of all kinds, including literature, music, movies, and television
- journalism and news media
- architectural and urban planning of all kinds, including social arrangements involving gardening, farming, landscape planning, and forest management
- social arrangements involving marine and water management
- social arrangements involving personal or mass transportation
- legal systems, including social arrangements involving incarceration and prisons
- the police, including private, local, regional, and national security organizations of all kinds
- the military
- political systems of all kinds, including all governments and nation-states

Granting this maximally broad conception of social institutions, then, the fundamental question we want to address and answer in this book is:

How do social institutions in contemporary neoliberal nation-states—with special concentrations on *higher education* and *mental health treatment*—systematically affect our conscious, self-conscious, affective, cognitive, and agential minds, thereby fundamentally affecting our lives, for worse or better?

Or even more precisely:

How do social institutions in contemporary neoliberal nation-states—with special concentrations on higher education and mental health treatment—systematically affect our consciousness and self-consciousness, affects, beliefs, judgments, thoughts, intentional actions, interpersonal interactions, practical agency, agential autonomy, and relational autonomy, insofar as we are *essentially embodied minds*, thereby fundamentally affecting our lives, for worse or better?

By *consciousness*, we mean an animal's capacity for subjective experience, including cognitions and thoughts of all sorts. Insofar as an animal is capable of subjective experience, then it is thereby the conscious *subject* of those experiences. By *self-consciousness*, we mean a conscious human animal's capacity for consciousness-of the acts, states, and (phenomenal or intentional/representational) contents of her own consciousness, and for forming self-directed beliefs or judgments about those acts, states, and contents. Insofar as a conscious human animal subject is also capable of self-consciousness, then it is thereby also a human *self*. By *affects*, we mean a conscious human animal's capacities for having desires, feelings, emotions, and passions. By *practical agency*, we mean a conscious human animal's power to choose or do things freely in the light of principles or reasons, including but not restricted to *moral* principles or reasons, on the basis of self-conscious processes of deliberation and decision, all in view of the subject's affects. By *agential autonomy*, we mean a conscious human subject's practical agency according to principles of her own choosing, aka *self-legislated* principles. Insofar as a conscious human subject or self is capable of agency and agential autonomy, then s/he is also thereby a human *person*. And by *relational autonomy*, we mean the coordinated practical agency of each of the members of a group of people, according to shared principles of their own choosing, aka *multiply self-legislated* principles.

As we've already noted, insofar as it critically examines the selective, formative, and mind-shaping impact of social institutions on our human subjective experiences, cognitions, self-consciousness, selfhood, affects, agency, and mutual agential interactions with others, *The Mind-Body Politic* is at once a study in the philosophy of mind and also a study in emancipatory political theory.

On the philosophy of mind side, this book is intended to be a 10-years-after sequel to our earlier co-authored book, *Embodied Minds in Action* (Hanna and Maiese, 2009), and it also builds on Robert Hanna's follow-up books, including *Rationality and Logic* (Hanna 2006) and the five-volume series, THE RATIONAL HUMAN CONDITION (Hanna 2018a; Hanna 2018b; Hanna 2018c; Hanna 2018d; Hanna 2015), as well as Michelle Maiese's follow-up books, *Embodiment, Emotions, and Cognition* (Maiese 2011) and *Embodied Selves and Divided Minds* (Maiese 2015). Moving forward radically from these philosophical starting points, it then extends those accounts to the new sub-field of what Jan Slaby aptly calls *political philosophy of mind* and what Suparna Choudhury and Slaby (2012) equally aptly call *critical neuroscience*. In addition to our earlier books, and groundbreaking recent work by Slaby and others,² we also draw on contemporary work on *collective intelligence* (see, for example, MIT Center for Collective Intelligence 2018), John Dewey's notion of "habit," Pierre Bourdieu's (1977) notion of "habitus," and J.J. Gibson's notion of "affordances."

And on the emancipatory political theory side, our account draws significantly on Immanuel Kant's philosophy of *enlightenment*,³ as extended to Friedrich Schiller's *aesthetic* version of Kantian enlightenment (Schiller 1794), on Søren Kierkegaard's *existentialism* (Kierkegaard 2000), on the *existential humanism* of the early Karl Marx (Marx 1964; and Fromm 1966), on Frankfurt School *Critical theory*,⁴ on Michel Foucault's notion of *governmentality* (Foucault, 1993, 1995), and on Hanna's *Kant, Agnosticism, and Anarchism* (Hanna, 2018d). In this latter connection, our project also bears certain similarities to Gilles Deleuze's and Félix Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* and *Thousand Plateaus* (Deleuze and Guattari 1977; Deleuze and Guattari 1987), John Protevi's *Political Physics* (Protevi 2001) and *Political Affect* (Protevi 2009), and Manuel DeLanda's *New Philosophy of Society* (DeLanda, 2006), by virtue of its fusing metaphysics, social theory, and radical politics. In particular, Deleuze and Guattari significantly anticipate and prefigure our emphasis on the fundamental role of essentially embodied affect in sociopolitical life; our critique of destructive, deforming social institutions, especially including neoliberal nation-States; the salient connection between social-institutional

dysfunction in neoliberal nation-States and mental illness; and our thesis that philosophy and emancipatory politics are indissolubly one.

Where our project differs significantly from these earlier works, however, lies in our special focus on the *metaphysics* of mind, and on the philosophy of mind more generally, as a novel and importantly illuminating starting-point and methodological guide for radical sociopolitical inquiry. Like Protevi (2009), we find it unfortunate that proponents of enactivism and embedded cognition rarely thematize the social fields within which cognitive practices are developed (p. 4); one of our central aims is to investigate how insights about the essentially embodied, enactive, embedded mind can be developed to better understand the mind-shaping influence of social institutions.

More specifically, however, in *The Mind-Body Politic*, we start with the following basic thesis, drawn from our earlier work—

1. Human minds are necessarily and completely embodied (*the essential embodiment thesis*).

Then we proceed from there to argue for three new basic theses:

2. Essentially embodied minds are *neither* merely brains *nor* over-extended “extended minds,” yet all social institutions saliently constrain, frame, and partially determine the social-dynamic patterns of our essentially embodied consciousness, self-consciousness, affect (including feelings, desires, and emotions), cognition, and agency—that is, they *literally shape* our essentially embodied minds, and thereby fundamentally affect our lives, for worse or better, mostly without our self-conscious awareness (*the mind-shaping thesis*).

(Sidebar note to the reader: Our use of the term “literally” in the phrase “literally shape” is intended to emphasize the important point that if the essential embodiment thesis is true, then insofar as social institutions, *actually-and-in-real-spacetime*, shape our bodily comportment, habits, and intentional actions by getting us to move our bodies in certain ways that we would not otherwise have done, they also, *actually-and-in-real-spacetime*, shape our minds. That is, if our minds are essentially embodied,

then the actual neurobiological dynamics and body movements in real space time that directly express the larger social-institutional framework in which they are embedded, are *also* actual dynamics and movements of the human mind itself in real spacetime. So the mind-shaping here is not just notional or metaphorical; it is *literal* and happening *literally*. Nevertheless, while insisting on the importance of this usage, we also recognize that some readers might find it slightly awkward or distracting; so we hereby apologize in advance for that and beg the reader's pardon).

3. *Many or even most* social institutions in contemporary neoliberal nation-states literally shape our essentially embodied minds, and thereby our lives, in such a way as to alienate us, mentally enslave us, or even undermine our mental health, to a greater or lesser degree (*the destructive Gemeinschaft/collective sociopathy thesis*).
4. Nevertheless, *some* social institutions, working against the grain of standard, dystopian social institutions in contemporary neoliberal nation-states, can make it really possible for us to self-realize, connect with others in a mutually aiding way, liberate ourselves, and be mentally healthy, authentic, and deeply happy (*the constructive Gemeinschaft/collective wisdom thesis*).

It should be noticed that the kind of destructive, deforming mind-shaping described in thesis 3 inherently admits of degrees—greater or lesser—whereas, by sharp contrast, the kind of constructive, enabling mind-shaping described in thesis 4 is categorically different from the kind of literal mind-shaping that occurs in standard, dystopian neoliberal social institutions. Hence the existence, creation, and development of constructive, enabling social institutions represents an absolute, radical break with the social-institutional *status quo* in contemporary neoliberal societies.

So understood, the conjunction of our four basic theses yields what we call *the enactive-transformative principle*:

Enacting salient or even radical changes in the structure and complex dynamics of a social institution produces corresponding salient or even

radical changes in the structure and complex dynamics of the essentially embodied minds of the people belonging to, participating in, or falling under the jurisdiction of, that institution, thereby fundamentally affecting their lives, for worse or better.

In short, we can significantly change our own and other people's essentially embodied minds, and in turn, their lives, whether for worse or better, *by means of* changing the social institutions we and they inhabit.

The enactive-transformative principle, in turn, motivates a philosophico-political *clarion call* whose simple, yet world-transforming message is that we can freely, systematically, and even radically change existing destructive, deforming social institutions in contemporary neo-liberal nation-states into new constructive, enabling social institutions; and this, as a consequence, enables us to transform our own and other people's essentially embodied minds and lives significantly or even radically *for the better*.

1.1 The Philosophy of Mind

Simply but also synoptically put, the philosophy of mind is philosophical inquiry and theorizing that is focused on any or all of four basic problems:

- i. *The Mind–Body Problem*: What explains the existence and specific character of conscious, intentional minds like ours in a physical world?
- ii. *The Problem of Mental Causation*: What explains the causal relevance and causal efficacy of conscious, intentional minds like ours in a physical world?
- iii. *The Problem of Intentional Action*: What explains the categorical difference between the things we consciously and intentionally do, and the things that just happen to us?
- iv. *The Problem of Mental Representation*: What explains our mind's capacity to represent the world and ourselves, and what is the nature of the mental content of our mental representations?

In view of these problems, for us, *the methodology* of the philosophy of mind is a systematic triangulation⁵ that simultaneously draws on and synthesizes the results of three distinct sub-methods:

- i. *phenomenology*, that is, the first-person introspective descriptions of conscious, intentional human experience, including intersubjective experience,
- ii. *cognitive or affective neuroscience*, that is, the empirical scientific study of cognitive or affective states, acts, and processes in human or non-human animals, and
- iii. *classical philosophical reasoning about the mind*, that is, either conceptual analysis and/or real, substantive metaphysics (see, for example, Unger 2014), directed to exploring the nature of minds like ours.

Needless to say, philosophy of mind in any or all of these senses has a long history, especially including Plato's *Phaedo*, Aristotle's *De Anima*, and Descartes's *Meditations on First Philosophy*. Fast-forwarding now from Descartes to the mid-twentieth century, it also encompasses a standard array of recent doctrines that we will now very briefly describe in order to situate our project in its contemporary philosophical context (see, for example, Chalmers 2002 and Kim 2006).

Classical Cartesian interactionist substance dualism in the philosophy of mind holds that the human mind and the human body are essentially distinct substances, one of them fundamentally non-material or non-physical, and the other one fundamentally material or physical, hence fundamentally non-mental. These distinct substances are held together by metaphysically mysterious contingent causal relations, including both mind-to-body or mind-to-mind causal relations (aka "mental causation") and body-to-mind causal relations. By sharp contrast, philosophy of mind in the mainstream Anglo-American Analytic tradition, running from roughly 1950 up to the beginning of the twenty-first century, can be doubly characterized by

- i. its official rejection of classical Cartesian interactionist substance dualism, and

- ii. its central, ongoing commitment to *brain-bounded materialism* (aka “brain-bounded physicalism”) as regards the nature of the mind-body relation and the nature of cognition.

At the same time, however, even despite its official anti-Cartesianism, this tradition remains implicitly committed to a three-part metaphysical presupposition that we call *Cartesian Fundamentalism*, according to which

- i. the mental is *fundamentally* (that is, inherently, necessarily, and exclusively) *non-physical*,
- ii. the physical is *fundamentally* (that is, inherently, necessarily, and exclusively) *non-mental*, and
- iii. no substance can have a *complementary dual* essence that is inherently and necessarily *both* mental *and* physical.

All classical Cartesian interactionist substance dualists and all materialists or physicalists, alike, are committed to Cartesian Fundamentalism. They differ only as to whether, on the one hand, the mental and the physical possess equal but opposite ontological status, which is classical Cartesian interactionist substance dualism, or, on the other, the mental asymmetrically ontologically depends on the physical, which is materialism or physicalism.⁶ Hence all materialists or physicalists, at bottom, are *Cartesian* physicalists.

Now *materialism* or *physicalism*, as such, says that properties of or facts about the human mind are constitutively determined by fundamentally physical facts. But there are two different types of materialism or physicalism:

- i. *reductive* materialism or physicalism, and
- ii. *non-reductive* materialism or physicalism.

Reductive materialism or physicalism says that all properties of or facts about the human mind are wholly constitutively determined by fundamentally physical properties or facts. That is: the human mind is nothing over and above the fundamentally physical world. This is also known as “the logical supervenience of the mental on the physical.”⁷ Non-reductive

materialism or physicalism, by contrast, says that some but not all properties of or facts about the human mind are wholly constitutively determined by fundamentally physical properties or facts. That is: certain causally inert properties or facts about the human mind—for example, about the normative character of rational intentionality, or about the qualitative specific character of consciousness—vary independently of fundamentally physical properties or facts, even though all of the human mind’s causally efficacious properties or facts are still wholly constitutively determined by fundamentally physical properties or facts. This is also known as “the natural or nomological but not logical supervenience of the mental on the physical.”⁸ *Brain-bounded* materialism or physicalism, whether reductive or non-reductive, says that properties or facts about the human mind are constitutively determined by fundamentally physical facts about the human brain. For example, a very popular mainstream view first articulated in 1950s, the *Materialist or Physicalist Mind-Brain Identity Theory*, holds that all mental properties and facts are asymmetrically or “downwardly” identical to, hence “nothing over and above,” brain-properties and brain-facts.

Over the first two decades of the twenty first century, philosophy of mind in the mainstream Anglo-American Analytic tradition (see, for example, Hanna 2001) also has been significantly influenced by *the extended mind thesis*,⁹ which challenges the specifically brain-bounded component of brain-bounded materialism or physicalism. This thesis says that the fundamentally physical constitutive ground of mental properties or facts extends into the natural and/or social environment beyond the human body, either by means of external vehicles of mental content or by means of external vehicles of consciousness. That is: the human mind is essentially spread out into the world.

By sharp contrast to philosophy of mind in the mainstream Anglo-American Analytic tradition, however, we reject materialism or physicalism (whether reductive or non-reductive), the brain-bounded thesis, *and* the extended mind thesis, alike. And at the same time, we *also* reject classical Cartesian interactionist substance dualism. Our double rejection of materialism or physicalism (whether reductive or non-reductive) on the one hand, and classical Cartesian substance dualism on the other, is rationally motivated and entailed by our thoroughgoing rejection of Cartesian