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## Duality and free will

Religions have long taught about the relationship between the body and soul. The Hinduism religion that is observed in a substantial part of Asia teaches that the soul and the body are two independent things. It is for this reason that they teach their followers about the immortality of the soul and the mortal nature of the human body. The religions, especially the ancient Asian religions teach that the soul of an individual will wander in space after the death of the body until it finds another human body. They further explain that the soul in a baby that has just been born is a soul that has lived for years. There then comes the question: where does the soul come from, and how is it linked to the human body? Perhaps the philosopher that has done a great deal of work in trying to explain the relationship between the soul and the body is René Descartes (Campbell 26). The philosopher, who lived between 1596 and 1650, is a brilliant thinker who undertook to expound on the works of such ancient think-tanks like Plato and Socrates. This paper seeks to explain the notion of the mind-body problem in relation to free will.
Before focusing on the relationship between free will and the concept of the body-mind problem, we can analyze and try to comprehend the elements of each of the concepts. The mind-body problem is a philosophical concept that explains the conflict between the soul which is intangible and invisible, and the physical aspects of a human being. This is to say that, the concept focuses on how the matter in the human being is related and is capable of working together with the spirit aspects of the same (Campbell 36). It is worth observing that the brain and the mind are two different things since the brain is the physical, tangible matter concerned with the task of coordinating the functions and activities of the human body. On the other hand, the mind is the spiritual and intellectual aspect of the brain that differentiates the conducts and capacities of individuals. Similarly, the spirit and the body are two different things in the sense that the spirit is the life form inside the body, whereas the body is the physical being or mass that differentiates people on the basis of size and appearance.
How then, are the two connected? This is where René Descartes comes in to explain the theory of duality. Duality is the concept concerned with explaining the connection between the mind and the physical body. This is to say that the body’s reactions are determined by the soul or the mind. In other words, the body and the mind are related in such a way that the reaction of either one of them affects the other. In simpler terms, the relationship between the body matter and the soul, which is invisible and intangible, is not as unidirectional as it has been long thought to be. The relationship between the mind and the body, according to René Descartes is bilateral. This is to say that the body influences the mind, the same way the mind influences the body. It has long been thought that it is only the mind that is capable of modifying the actions of the body. On the contrary, oriental and western philosophers in the modern world of sociological sciences have come to the agreement that, René Descartes’ presumption of duality holds truth.
Freewill is explained by Marias (p. 96) as the capacity of an agent to nominate between two options without undue pressure from both internal and external factors. In simple terms, free will is the capacity of an individual to select something out of their conscience, doing that which they deem fit or suitable according to the situation. Where society is governed by stringent rules and laws, they have to act as per the requirements of the law. On the contrary, where the individuals live without much rule and instruction, they can make decisions and conduct themselves the way they deem fit. Free will has been a matter of discussion for well over a millennia today. The concept dates back to the years when Greece was undergoing elementary enlightenment, with philosophers starting to realize that there was the need to question the existence of God. It was during this time that the prominent thinkers question the role of religion and legal structures in society. The early philosophers questioned why there had to be laws and religious codes of conduct.
During the pre-Socratic period, philosophy was fast evolving, with people coming out to challenge the authorities citing the argument that such authorities were limiting their right to think and practice personal liberty. Such liberty is connected to the idea of free will. Other philosophers were against the idea of everyone acting in a manner that appeared right to them. This was the beginning of nature versus nurture in relation to the conduct of human beings. Nature entails that a person should use their conscience and innate thoughts to make a decision. On the other hand, the proponent s of nurture explained that man had to be regulated by some social rules and structures such as law and education. According to Barzun (p. 124), the nurture theory is a limitation to the exercising of goodwill. In essence, freewill and duality date back to more than millennia. The relationship between duality and freewill was established by René Descartes, who explained that there was a feature of the human soul that interacted with the physical being when making decisions. He, however, explained that even in the absence of laws, free will cannot be sufficiently exercised since there are internal conflicts within an individual.
According to René Descartes in his meditations about the life of a human being in the context of his own, he says that he cannot compare the relationship between his soul and his body to the relationship between a sailor and his ship. He says that, unlike the sailor-ship relationship where the influence is unidirectional, the relationship between his should and his body was bidirectional. In so saying, he meant that the body influences the decisions of the soul as much as the soul influences the actions of the body. For instance, a person will always dress warmly when the weather is freezing. This basic action can be used to explain the way in which the body and mind communicate. How? It is the body that feels the cold. The discomfort caused by the cold is interpreted by the mind. The mind then instructs the body to find some warmth. This act indicates that the body matter and the mind are two different things that are bound together. It is for this reason that there cannot be free will. Free will cannot be exercised by an individual’s mind since the decision of the mind is influenced by the body, as well.
Duality can be explained as fighting within oneself. Such fighting is said to have taken place where and when the desires of the body and the preferences of the mind are at conflict. The mind of a person could be of the idea that a person should find some food. On the contrary, the body could hold contrary opinions as the stomach is full and needs no more food. This way the person remains indecisive. Indecisiveness caused by the conflict between the mind and the body is the best illustration of the relationship between duality and free will. The fact that neither the mind nor the body can act independently explains why neither of them can exercise free will. Such things passion, sensation and feelings strengthen the relationship between the mind and the body hence reducing the chances of there being such a concept as free will.
Duality has been explained as the relationship between the good and the destructive impulses that have been explained by various religions. According to such religious beliefs, duality is not a matter of the mind and the body but rather between the good and evil dimensions in a human being. It is worth noting that the religions believe that a human being has two innate features within their minds, that is, the good and the evil aspects. They further explain that the limitations to free will are not as a matter of the body and the mind but rather the conflict between the good side of the soul and evil aspects of it. René Descartes disapproved this theory arguing that there was a difference between entrapped angelic forms and human beings. According to Campbell (p. 98), René Descartes’ views are true in the sense that an entrapped angel is not connected in any way to the human bodies in which they are entrapped. Campbell (p. 56) further explains that it is because of this difference that the entrapped angels do not experience human feelings and experiences such as pain and anger. As such, the angels can exercise free will as they do not exist and act in duality.
Barzun (p. 84) explains the relationship between the mind and body of a human being through a long historic, narration of wars and conflicts among the human race. Barzun, who explains the evolutions and developments that man has undergone in transforming his relationship with himself, brings out the fact that human beings do not have free will. The people that participate in wars for example, are not doing it because of their conscience, but rather because their free will are limited. According to Barzun (p. 86) a soldier at war has willpower that is supposed to serve three masters: the commands of the army, the mind or conscience, and the body. It is because of the lack f free will that man has done most destructive things and executed unjustified decisions.
In explaining substance duality, René Descartes says that the mind and the body are independent things that have separate desires. According to René Descartes, the likelihood that the mind and the body will have conflicting desires is extremely high since the body is obsessed with materiality while the mind is concerned about the purity or the quality of life (Barzun 116). As such, it becomes difficult to explain some aspects of life and religion. For instance, on the belief that the mind and body of an individual are independent, which is guilty in case of a murder? The body whose strength strangled the victim to death or the mind that thought and made the decision to kill? Here, the freewill of either is held on the balances. The reason for this is the fact that if the two have the capacity to exercise free will, it is either the body or the soul that is guilty. However, the body cannot commit murder without instruction from the mind. Similarly, the mind cannot kill a person without the strength of the body, however, willing it may be.
In explaining the elements of life and attitude, Marias (p. 67) explains that free will is as old as the human race since such attitudes are subject to the freewill of the mind of a person. Marias, who explains the ideas of pre-Socratic philosophers and proponents of the Pythagorean ideas, explains duality as the independence of action between the soul and body. The philosopher argues that understanding life is exceptionally difficult and explaining the soul that is born, and the ideas it holds is not the easiest of tasks. According to the philosopher, in the search for the meaning of life, man must explain why he is born confused. People are said to be born confused because the society does not influence the relationship between matter and mind. It is a natural phenomenon.
In conclusion, it is evident to see that the relationship between duality and free will is not easy to understand. It is because of duality that free will becomes limited and incapable of being practiced. The explanations given by religion and various philosophies on the idea of free will tend to explain that man cannot possibly exercise free will since nurture outweighs nature in a society where laws and restrictions have been instituted to take care of the intrapersonal conflicts that involve the mind and body. The animalistic desires of the body, which psychologists and social scientists have connected to the id level of human development, can only be regulated where the mind of an individual has developed to the level of super ego. It is only a mind that has a super ego that can observe the regulations of society and limit the exercising of free will. Marias (p. 77) explains that free will is a wide concept and that understanding it is not easy, especially in the context of duality.

## Works Cited

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