

# Bridging the gap of mind body dualism



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## **Bridging The Gap Of Mind/Body Dualism**

BRIDGING THE GAP OF MIND/BODY DUALISM I categorically reject the assumption that mind is non-physical. In a world where the advanced technology of electronic microscopes and digital telescopes has expanded the scope of reality beyond physical perception, proving the unfathomable existence of quantum reality within a para-galactic expanse, it would be ignorance to belittle the mind to an intangible, non- physical, theoretical abstract.

We can no longer limit reality to a scope that reduces reality to what we see, touch or experience through the senses. Historic development has expanded culture through scientific knowledge. It would be regressive to think that mind is a subjective experience, formless, beyond physical constraints, obliterating evidence in the functional analysis of behaviour.

Skinner shared this " aversion to free will, to homunculi, to dualism" proving that a person's will is determined by the environmental interactions that control his behavior... He went so far as to suggest an ideal social environment (Skinner, 1948), controlled by behaviouristic principles and learning incentives in the hope of reducing the injustice brought about by the schizoid split between body and mind; between what we do and our will; between applicable rights and theoretic responsibilities. " The mind" he said, " is not empty, and it cannot be adequately treated simply as a black box" (Killeen, p. 233).

Neuroscience goes beyond traditional behaviourism and describes the cognitive, inside-the-box mechanisms, with an enormous collection of experimental data of information-processing mechanisms (Stich, 1984 p.

649). The recent development of machines that "think" proves that functional programming of digital computers is possible, confirming what Hobbes described, back in 1651 in his Introduction to Leviathan, as the mechanistic principle of reasoning "... that is nothing more than reckoning; that is adding and subtracting, the consequent names agreed upon for the marking and signifying of our thoughts" (p. 49). He suggested that reasoning, along with imagining, sensing and deliberation about action could be programmed into mechanistic sequences, now evident in computer-programming.

Psycho-functionalism endorses these cognitive theories of the mind providing explicit objectivity to the way beliefs and desires identifiably interact in stimulation and behavior (Block and Fodor, 1972). Like behaviorism, functionalism has taken mental states from the realm of the "subjective" to scientific objectivity of the physical mind.

Microscopes have given depth to scientific insight into bodily functions, and advanced technology has identified the brain and neural connections, exacting the precise location of thoughts in the brain. Electromagnetic imagery has even measured the physical properties of thoughts, further proving the mind to be physical.

Bridging this dualism starts with historic maturation of the understanding of the mind. The epistemology of the mind includes descriptions of it as reason, intellect, soul, consciousness, spirit, psyche, imagination, memory, passion and behaviour.

The dualism between mind and body traces a " yawning chasm between mental and physical states, difficult to bridge" as William James described it. " an unwarrantable impermanence in the present state of psychology." (p.

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118-119)

Plato differentiated thought and reason from senses and imagination, desire and passion. (Phaedo, 241-242/ Sophist, 567-568).

Aristotle described the mind as "rational soul".." Whereby the soul thinks and judges. (Soul p. 633-641)

For Lock and Hume, imagination and memory are attributed to understanding. (Human Understanding p. 313-315)

Aquinas differentiated the passive mind (speculative apprehension of ideas) from active mind (thoughts put into practice).

For Plotinius and Augustine, mind is part of the soul, with a distinct difference between intellect and will (Second Ennead p. 68).

Lucretius, like Hobbes and Hume, agreed that "mind is the directing principle of the soul; the head, so to speak, and reigns paramount in the whole body"" It is the thinking and deciding part of the soul". For them, abstraction is an impression of the senses. (p. 251-293)

Locke and Berkeley described the mind as a spiritual entity (Berkeley, p. 431).

Descartes identified the human mind with the rational soul... thus, "dual nature of man". He described this union of two distinct substances, material/body, and spiritual/ mind and soul as "res cogita" (thinking substance) and "res extensa" (extended substance), now known as Cartesian dualism. He said: "there are certain activities, which we call corporeal e. g., magnitude, figure, motion and all those that cannot be thought of apart from extension in space; and the substance in which they exist is called body.. Furthermore, there are other activities, which we call thinking activities, e. g., understanding, willing, imagining, feeling, etc., which agree in falling under

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the description of thought". Descartes' " Cogito ergo sum" commonly translated as " I think, therefore I am", actually means " thinking is; therefore there is thinking", as evidence of the distinct existence of the mind (p. 224-226).

For Spinoza " The human mind is part of the infinite intellect of God, and therefore, when we say that the human mind perceives this or that thing, we say nothing less than that God has this or that idea". He includes love and desire as part of his " modes of thought".

Hegel says human mind is a phase or dialectic moment of the Absolute Mind or Spirit. For William James, soul belongs to metaphysics, whereas the states of mind are states of consciousness (idem. 95-107).

For Freud the mind has different layers (psychic structure) of awareness, described as unconscious, latent- preconscious and conscious. (p. 829)

For Kant, the mind is a process: " All our knowledge begins with sense, proceeds thence to understanding, and ends with reason beyond which nothing higher can be discovered in the human mind where man elaborates the matter of intuition and subjects it to the highest unity of thought. He describes three faculties: Sensitive faculty- intuition; understanding- judgement; and scientific knowledge. Mind, for him, is the unity of the triad cognitive faculties. (p. 599-600).

Understanding the evolutionary notion of the mind, we can better bridge the dualism between mind and body. Descartes, Spinoza, Locke and James all believed in the duality of substance (physical and mental). Hume also acknowledged dualism saying " There is no principle in all nature more mysterious than the union between soul and body. Aquinas said: " Body is necessary for the action of the intellect;" and again" The angelic intellect is a

cognitive power which is neither the act of a corporeal organ, nor in any way connected with corporal matter"; "... The human mind is not so completely divorced from matter for though man's intellect is not the act of an organ, yet it is the power of the soul, which is the form of the body" (p 84).

Nearly two thousand years separate us from these conjectures, with massive additional scientific and technological discoveries that now enable us to stand on the shoulders of experience, and see further.

When I was a child, I would close my eyes, to hide, confident no one would see me. To assume that mind is non-physical is to close one's eyes on scientific evidence, regressing into childhood.

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