

Mind-body problem summary



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Sur Supervisor Mind-Body Problem Noam Chomsky discusses in this essay numerous approaches that philosophers and scientists have taken on human mind and language phenomena. He equates mind with optical, chemical and electrical phenomena that is known to the mankind. According to him, mind means all the mental aspects of the world that most people are aware about. He emphasizes that language aspects too fall in the same line as one commonly understands phenomena such as electrical force, complex molecules, or visual systems. Thus, the author takes naturalistic approach for mental and linguistic aspects of the world and attempts to unify it with the core natural sciences.

Descartes discussed mind-body issue in the different dimension that came to be known as dualism in the philosophical arena. The approach of ‘mechanical philosophy’ began emerging during the 17th century that was based on the premise that objects interact through direct contact; however, Descartes tended to emphasize that language did not lie within the realms of mechanism. For him, thought process was a separate entity distinct from the physical body. Newton argued that planetary and terrestrial motion in the universe did not follow the mechanical philosophy. He essentially wanted to convey that anti-materialist things did exist in this universe.

Newtons assertion of mysterious force, curved space, electrical force goes beyond the concept of body or matter entirely. While quantum theory in physics and chemical bonding in chemistry helps explaining a unified universe, does this mean that mind/brain as a unified object can best explain the language and mind phenomena in humans? Many attempts to reduce mental properties to neural network phenomena; however, that lead to several serious questions.

Considerable efforts have been made to show that mind is nothing but matter, and language thought processes are properties of brain. It is the neurophysiological activities of brain that causes mental phenomena.

Naturalism or materialism, as a theory, got resurgence in the 1960s attempting to establish the belief that mental state was, in no way, different than physical entities. That is to say matter is as compatible with thought and sensation as with attraction and repulsion. Organized system of matter known as brain eventually lead to perception and thought process. In a way, emergence of thoughts in humans is all through nervous system of brain. Brain acts as a mechanism to create thoughts in humans. While Newton did expose the imperfectness of the mechanical philosophy, his philosophy of anti-materialism was obscure too – not leading to any firm conclusion.

In line with scientific temperament, many naturalists such as Isaac Beekman, proposed to replace God by natural selection; however, the argument defied its own logic. Moreover, brain sciences are still far from explaining the issues related to thought process and language formation. Alan Turing devised test for measuring machine intelligence, but according to Turing himself that did not deserve any discussion because of so many variants available. Thus, in the absence of a clear cut concept of matter or body, it is difficult to resolve the mind-body issue except what has been known or understood so far.

Work-Cited

Chomsky, Noam. “ Language and Nature”. Mind. Oxford University. 104 (413). 1-10