

Mind body and passions according to descartes philosophy essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Rene Descartes is born in La Haye. (31st march 1596-11th February 1650). His father was a lawyer and magistrate. In 1606 he was sent to the Jesuit college of La Fleche. Then in 1615 he took admission in University of Poitiers. He became a great French philosopher. He spent his time by writing several. He was also a Mathematician and physicist. He is renowned as the father of Modern Philosophy as well as an analytical geometry, he made the connector between algebra and geometry and also an important personality in scientific revolution.

Meditation on first philosophy is one of the great writings of Descartes. He started meditation in 1639. It was first published in 1641 in Latin (as *Meditations Metaphisiques*). In 1647 it was republished in French (as *Meditations de prima philosophia, in qua dei existential et anima in immortalities demonstrator*).

Descartes finished his writings of the *passion de l'ame* (passion of the soul) for insisting of princess Elizabeth of Bohemia.

" The manuscript the passion of the soul that Descartes brought to Elizabeth in the early 1646 was a map of the soul, both the human soul and the soul of a man., Rene Descartes. Descartes' other writings - technical treatise on geometry and optics, discourses on method, meditations on metaphysics - were objective and reasoned in the style of the new rational science. The treatise on the passion was a description of man , or a new man, or a certain man, of his joys and sorrows, agitation and equilibrium, loves and hates. Written as a systematic defence of the moral and medical advice that he pressed on Elizabeth without success, inspired with a genuine desire to

have her and others partake of the contentment he believed himself to enjoy, passions is a diary, confession, a credo that lays bare the interior motivation of man 's rational philosophy." (The princes and the philosophers, master of passion. Page.. 89)

His passion of soul is accepted as the human emotional theory of passions and psychological theory of underlying by the passions.

MIND:

According to Descartes mind is an independent substance which has the power to think. He says in the Meditation II that " I think, Therefore I am" This is a positive sentence and no body can deny it because it is very clear and vivid to us. If we think that I am not thinking, therefore I am not, is not possible. The word 'I' is the key word and which denotes or proofs its existence itself.

Descartes using the word I as mind in first part of the meditation and says that this not the part of the soul rather this is whole of the soul which can think. It is a incorporeal substance. Thinking is the essence of a soul. It is separable from the most material substance body. Mind can deny, assert, wills, doubt etc. No corporeal substance has the power to do these types of mental works but only the mind can do these.

BODY:

Similarly body is also an independent substance. The essence of the body is extension and it is passive. Without extension no body can imagine body.

Descartes argued that God is the creator of these two substances or mind and body is created substance. God is the only absolute substance. Though mind and body created by god, yet are independent to each other.

We can figure out this as:

GOD

The absolute substance &

The creator of two substances

MIND

Essence- Thinking

In corporeal substance.

BODY

Essence- Extension.

Corporeal substance.

Mind and body are two different substances. Since the essence of a body is extension and thinking of mind, we can not think body without extension and similarly can not accept mind without take it as a thinking thing. Then it derives that mind (the incorporeal substance) and the body (corporeal substance) are so different. So the mixing of two different substance is impossible.

But we feel that there is some conjunction between mind and body or there is a close relation between them.

For instance:

When my throats become dry, I need to drink water and I feel that I am thirsty.

The cause of this type of feelings is the close relation between mind and body. Then we should agree with the close or co relation between mind and body.

Dualism:

The Word dualism is means a philosophical doctrine which contains various opinions of many philosophers about the relationship between the mind and body. The claim of dualism is that mental events are not the physical.

Various types of Dualism:

There is various type of dualism in the history of the philosophy.

Such as:

Interactionism, Epiphenomenalism and parallelism etc.

Descartes is one of the famous dualistic philosophers who gives us a explicatory discussion the mind body problem.

Descartes thinks that mind (non-corporeal substance) and the body (corporeal substance) are the two separate substances. Mind is distinctly

distinguishable from brain. They can exist independently each other. This is the key words of the Cartesian dualism.

" We can summarize it in the following four maxims:

- 1) There are two and only two kinds of (finite substances: corporeal things and thinking things (minds or rational souls).
- 2) The essence of the mind is thought, the essence of the body is extension.
- 3) Human bodies and their properties are objects of sense perception. Minds and their properties cannot be objects of sense perception.
- 4) Interaction between mind and body is 'rationally unintelligible'; in a human being, a mind and a body are 'substantially united'." (Descartes' Dualism, Gordon Baker and Katherine J. Morris, chapt. 4, p-59.)

These four above mentioned points are the most important part of the Cartesian doctrine of dualism.

Descartes describes dualism by characterized an individual person combined with body (corporeal substance) and mind (non material substance). He considers the person as the seat of the 'substantial union' of the corporeal body and the non corporeal mind. This union of the mind and body in the person is very closely.

Then he argues that though mind and the body are the two most separate substances, they can interact between each other. Mind can control the body and the body also has the power to influence the mind or the corporeal thing

can affect the non corporeal thing. The relation between the mind and body is by directional.

For instance:

If I have a pain in my leg then my mind is also become sad. Or similarly we can say, sometimes our mood is off then we feel uneasy, illness or weak.

Here we see that in the first case the corporeal body affects our mind and in the second case just the opposite.

Descartes opinion about mind body problem is known as the interactions. He says that Mind and body interact with each other without interchanging. He asserts the meditation six that the relationship between mind and body is not like the relationship between pilot and ship. This type of relationship has no intimacy. He says that we can understand from our experience that that the relationship between my soul and body not that type because there has too much intimacy.

If there is any damage in the ship then nothing will be happen in the pilot. But if my hand has an injury then I am become very sad and this sadness occurs in my mind.

So we can understand that there is a close relationship between mind and body. We can see it in our everyday life that that there is some feelings which we can not explain without expressing them togetherly.

Such as:

Thirst, Appetite, Emotion, Smelling etc.

These are can not explain only using the term mind or similarly body. To explain these, we have to accept the intimate relation between mind and body.

Now we see that mind and body interact with each other. Here we see an uncertainty that how two so different substances can interact? Where this interaction is held?

Descartes tries to give answers these questions by saying that mind and body interact with each other, this interaction is took place in the pineal gland.

Pineal gland:

" Pineal gland also called as the pineal body. It is a small endocrine gland in the vertebrate brain. It is a small endocrine gland in the vertebrate brain. It produces melatonimelatonin, a hormone that affects the modulation of wake/sleep patterns and photoperiodic (seasonal) functions. It is shaped like a tiny pine cone (hence its name), and is located near the centre of the brain, between the two hemisphere, tucked in a two rounded thalamic bodies join. It is looks like a grain of rice (5-8 mm) in humans and the colour of it is reddish gray." ([http: en. wikipedia. org/wiki/pineal_gland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/pineal_gland)) Now

Descartes clearly explains the interaction process between mind and body in the treaties passion of the soul

Descartes thinks that pineal gland is the main place where can soul situated.

It has the power to influence the nervous system because his beliefs that <https://assignbuster.com/mind-body-and-passions-according-to-descartes-philosophy-essay/>

cerebro spinal fluid of the verticals is the controller of the body which is acted through the nerves and the pineal gland act upon this interaction process.

Pineal gland is the most important word in the Cartesian dualism. Then he says that human and non humans both have the pineal gland. But only the human beings have the mind. Non human beings have no mind. So they can not feel any pain.

Here a doubt arises in those Descartes dualisms that how can non material substance or mind influence a material substance or body?

Now Descartes clearly explains the interaction process between mind and body in the treatise passion of the soul (Les Passion de lame). This writing is dedicated to princess Elizabeth of Bohemia. It was his last published work (1649).

Here he clearly explains about passions or emotions or feelings and how these two so separate substances can interact with each other. In the passion of soul he gives biological and psychological explanations.

Passions of the soul:

The definition of the passion according to Descartes:

" In a very general sense, any perception, i. e. operation of the intellect (principles of philosophy, 32), is a passion of the soul.

Perceptions are either caused by the soul (passions of the soul, 19) or they are caused by the body (passions of the soul, 21). First, Descartes limits his

definition of the passions of the soul to include only the perceptions caused by the body, but he specifies the definition further.

Among the perceptions caused by the body, we refer some to things outside of ourselves (passions of the soul, 23), we refer some to our body (passions of the soul, 25). Thus, Descartes writes: " after having considered in what respects the passions of the soul differ from all its other thoughts, it seems to me that we may define them generally as those perceptions, sensations, and emotions of the soul which we are refer particularly to it , and which are caused maintained, and strengthened by some movement of the spirits"(passions of the soul, 27).

However, although perceptions, sensations, and emotions can all correctly be called passions of the soul, Descartes writes: " We restrict the term to signify only perceptions which refer to the soul itself , and it is the latter that I have undertaken to explain here under the title 'passions of the soul'"(passions of the soul, 25)

Thus in other words, in its most specific meaning, a passion of the soul is a mental state caused (and maintained) by the body and referred to the soul alone." (from the class note: Philosophical anthropology seminar).

In the passions of the soul he draws a classification of definition of pass

" Thoughts- Produce actions of the soul (volitions and voluntary imaginings).

Passions of the soul in general sense(perceptions)

Caused by the soul Caused by the body

(perception of volition)

Neural non neural

Ref. to ext. obj. ref.. to body ref. to soul

(passions in restricted sense)

(The passions of the soul, p-338)

There fore we are seeing that there are three types of passions:

Perception:

We may call passions as perception in general way " to signify all the thoughts which are not actions of the soul or volitions, but not if we use it to signify only the evident knowledge." (Passions of the soul, p-339)

Bodily sensations:

" Bodily sensations reveal that the mind is actually quasi- permixtum with the section of extension. It is not only causally conjoined with Body at some point, but is in fact pervasively blended through and through with a section of Extension so that it feels the states of that section as its own proper body." (Essays on Descartes meditations, Chapt- Cartesian passions and the union of the soul, P-518)

Emotion passions:

" The emotion-passion , reveals that the entity formed by mind's pervading its own

In the passions of the soul, Descartes wanted to show how our emotion is related to the soul and how it is united with the body but that, taken together, mind and body form a whole with interlocked functions, directed to the well-being of that whole." (Essays on Descartes meditations, Cartesian passions and the union of the soul, P-518).

He says that " The passions are all caused in the soul by the body, through the intermission of the nerves bringing animal spirits to act on the pineal gland." (Essays on Descartes meditations, Cartesian passions and the union of the soul, P-517).

Machine psychology:

In the passions of the soul Descartes briefly describes a machine psychology. At first he mentions the inner component of our bodies, such as: heart, brain, stomach, muscles, nerves, veins, arteries etc. Then he gives a sketch of the process of blood circulation and the structure of heart. He asserts that the movements of the limbs are not independent they are dependent on the muscles. He lastly denotes that these movements of the muscles and similarly every sensation are also depend on the nerves, " which are like little threads or tubes coming from the brain and containing, like the brain itself, a certain very fine air or wind which is called the 'animal spirits'." (passions of the soul: p-330)

He says that " while we are alive there is a continual heat in our hearts, which is a kind of fire that the blood of the veins maintains there. This fire is the corporeal principle underlying all the movements of our limbs." (passions of the soul: p-331)

According to Descartes animal spirits means which can be produced by the blood and causes the movements of the body by stimulating it and influencing the muscles. It is the main thing for the bodily movements.

We know that the mind and the body are so different substances but we also know that mind and body are inter related by the passions. The word "'we' who is served by the passions" and refers as the whole. (Cartesian passions and the union of the soul, P-518) He says that passions motivated the soul to think. He is using various passions to solve the mind body problem.

In the passions of the soul Descartes shows how the soul and the body act on each other by describing the little gland (pineal gland, now which is called pituitary gland.) and 'recollecting the mechanism of our body'.

He says that this gland is radiates through the animal spirits, blood, nerves etc. " which can take on the impressions of the spirits and carry them through the arteries to all the limbs." (The passions of the soul, p-341)

In the passions of the soul he says that,

" The functions of all the passions dispose our soul to want the things which nature deems , useful for us , and to persist in this volition; and the same agitations of the spirits which normally causes the passions also disposes the body to make a movements which helps us to attain these things." (The passions of the soul, p-349)

In the second part of the passions of the soul, he says that he promoted some new passions to solving the problem of the mind and the matter.

The explanation of the six primitive passions:

" Wonder, Love, Hate, Desire, Joy and Sadness. All have their source in wonder at a potentially interesting event or object and have distinguishable physiological effects depending on whether the remarkable object is seen as good or bad for the body, attainable or attained, and possessed or not possessed by the others." (The princes and the philosophers, page-90).

According to Descartes Mind and body are two opposite substance but they act together by the passion. He wants to explain it elaborately to solve the problem of the mind and body.

Yet His views are criticised by many philosophers.

Criticism of Descartes' point of view:

Descartes says there is a direct relation between mind and pineal gland, not with the body.

But it is not possible. Because if mind can influence the pineal gland directly, then its necessarily follows that mind can influence body, since pineal gland is the part of the body, as it situated in the brain.

Then he also mentions that mind and body are two totally different substances but they have a close relationship, rather the relation between mind and body is causal.

It also not so acceptable, because the criterion of the causal relation between two things is equality of quality and quantity between two things.

But there is no equality between non material substance mind and material substance body. Since mind and body are two very different things are can not be closely related and it is very clear to us.

Though there are many unfavourable judgements against Descartes arguments, we can not deny him completely. He wants to solve the problem of mind and body relationship by giving a psychological and biological description of interaction processes of mind and body through passions. Which is elaborately discussed in the passions of the soul and it is very valuable and we never refute it.