

# Essay on what is mind

[Health & Medicine](#), [Body](#)



## **Abstract**

In the present paper, the issue of mind is discussed in the framework of mind/body problem. While in the times of Aristotle and Plato it was named differently and explained through objects materiality and soul divinity, the modern perception of the same correlation was emphasized by Descartes as body/mind problem. In the present paper, the essence of the problem is outlined in the context of one of the modern philosophies of mind, meaning physicalism. The main aims of this essay is to identify the corner stone of physicalist concept, its main supporting and opposing arguments, and distinguish which position is the strongest one and understand the reason why.

Key words: physicalism, body/mind problem, knowledge, exclusion, consciousness.

## **What is mind?**

In the history of human thought, there were various dilemmas which the brightest minds of their times were trying to solve and which remained enigmas until our times. The mind/body problem is one of those issues. While, in times of Aristotle and Plato, it was named differently and explained through the objects materiality and soul divinity, the modern perception of the same correlation was shaped by Descartes as body/mind problem. In the present paper, the essence of the problem is explained in the context of one of the modern philosophies of mind, meaning physicalism. The main aims of this essay is to identify the corner stone of physicalist concept, its main supporting and opposing arguments, and distinguish which argument is the

strongest and why.

First of all, it is worth to identify what Descartes meant by body/mind problem. According to his argument, mental phenomena or results of mind activity are usually different from the physical phenomena and human body's perception of them and itself (Jaworski, 2011). Subsequently, the problem is that the connection between mind's perception of the reality and the physical body is actually unknown. In this context, it is not clear what the dependence between mind and body is. Depending on the answer to this question philosophers can be divided into physicalists and dualists. While dualists consider that mind and body are relatively independent in their perception of reality and mutual influence, physicalists suggest that mind reflects only what is perceived by body. Thus, physicalists consider that conceptually the world can be comprehended only through the physical qualities of the objects in reality (Jaworski, 2011).

Getting deeper into the rational of physicalism, it becomes clear that physicalism can be reduced to two essential concepts: supervenience and token. The essence of the first one is that each system of perception consists of two levels of existence: higher and lower. The main point of such system is that higher level is inevitably dependent and rooted in lower level (Gillet & Loewer, 2007). In the context of physicalism, this system shows the direct dependence of mind on physical perception of real objects. Subsequently, mind/higher level cannot exist without physical/lower level. Although this suggestion might seem rational, it creates conceptual limitation of mind, which actually denies an opportunity of evolution beside physical experiences (Goff, 2011).

The grounding or physicalization of mind is further established by token concept. According to this concept, mental activity is directly connected to the activity of brain in sense that each condition of brain corresponds to a specific mental state, which corresponds only to this brain condition (Gillet & Loewer, 2007). In other words, there is no other brain condition which would result in the same mental state. In the broad meaning, each object of the physical reality has its own perception in the mental realm. The direct implication of such argument is that cognition of the entire reality and truth of existence can be experienced through physical senses and can be obtained by an individual (Jaworski, 2011). In other words, it is considered that there is nothing in the realm of the physical world that an individual cannot perceive; thus, the entire world is physical.

The main supporting argument of this philosophical thought is based on the exclusive principle of argumentation. According to it, the mental phenomenon is connected to the physical phenomenon directly without involvement of the third, intermediate phenomenon. This idea can be seen on the example of hunger. When a person feels physical hunger, the mental desire to eat appears. In this connection no third phenomenon is involved - receptors send signal into the brain and corresponding desire appears. In this context, the essence of the exclusive principle is that third/mediatory phenomenon is excluded because its existence is unverifiable; subsequently, such phenomenon does not exist (Goff, 2011). Although this argument seems to be quite logical and exact, there is still a lot human kind does know about the environment it exists in and itself; thus, this concept remains controversial in modern philosophy.

The main opposing argument of the physicalism is knowledge argument. The main statement this argument opposes is physicalist idea that the world is exquisitely physical. The essence of knowledge argument is that consciousness cannot be developed merely through the physical truth. In this context, it is argued that each physical truth is limited to a specific environment of existence, and that physical perception connected to it is limited as well. The most vivid proof of this argument is famous Frank Jackson's example of Mary, whose perception of the reality was measured by the black-white physical cognition of the world due to her limited physical stay in the black and white room and black-white television (Gillet & Loewer, 2007). Subsequently, her knowledge of the reality was entirely correct and full in respect to the physicalist approach, but it was far from the whole truth of the real existence. The moment Mary went out of the room, a new truth appeared; thus, her initial physical perception could not tell her all the truth of the entire reality (Goff, 2011).

It can be concluded that, although physicalist justification of world perception is quite rational, exclusive argument is much weaker than knowledge argument. Subsequently, physicalist perception of the world cognition is far from the integrity and truthfulness. It does not have an overwhelming and all-excluding explanation of the real-life phenomena. This philosophy's exclusion argument is weaker than knowledge reason because it leaves no space for the mental activity in consciousness and subconsciousness which cannot be explained through the physical perception or evidences but which still exists. Another weakness is in rejection of mental creativity which is actually denied by exclusive argument

and physicalism in general. Subsequently, this philosophical concept is far from integral and exhaustive explanation of the mind/body problem. Mind is not only in perception of physical objects; it is in conscious and subconscious creativity and unpredictability of thoughts and ideas.

## **References**

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