

Philosophy Assignment

Manvith Reddy - 2018101057

Part 1

1. B
2. D
3. D
4. B
5. B

Part 2

1. B
2. A
3. B
4. A
5. A

Part 3 - The Mind-Body Problem

Modern philosophy's roots stretch back to the early 1600's when Descartes put forward his most famous doctrine, "**Dualism**". Dualism as a concept was much older than Descartes' time, but his revolutionary concept of Cartesian Dualism (also known as Substance Dualism) has had a profound impact on modern society. Descartes believed that every substance that exists had two fundamental characteristics, an "**essence**" and "**properties**". The essence of the mind was its continuous existence in a conscious state which he called "**the state of thinking**" and the essence of the body was its physical three dimensional presence which he coined as "**extension**". Descartes believed that our mind is infinite, always jumping from one conscious state to another and that we would cease to exist if we ceased to be in one of these states. On the other hand, Descartes had essentially classed our bodies no differently to the laptop I am writing this essay on or the table on which it sits. In his opinion, the body was merely a physical entity occupying three dimensional space and following the laws of science and physics.

Descartes essentially announced a clear division between the mind and the body. In his eyes, they occupied two completely different realms of reality and therefore, should have no impact on each other. However we was never truly able to convince himself that these two entities were completely independent, that they had no affect on each other. This became known as the **mind-body problem**. This particular problem drew my attention instantly because it was the first logical question that popped up in my head when I read Descartes doctrine. How could he so easily divide two entities that seemed so connected in so many different ways? Almost any kind of physical event occurring in the physical world I took part in had consequences on my mental conscious state, causing it to jump from state to state as Descartes described it. Hitting my toe to the corner of my bed is a purely physical event between two objects occupying three dimensional physical space, but my mind and conscious felt every little ounce of pain in the spiritual realm. Conversely, my mental state of mind almost always has an impact on my

physical activities. How a person's "feels" mentally has profound impact on whatever they choose to do in the physical world. My mental state currently will have just as much impact on the quality of this submission just as yours will have when evaluating it.

Another reason I found this problem extremely intriguing is due to the logical connections I had managed to form between this specific problem to Descartes' other problems. In some odd way all the **problems felt intertwined**, with their **roots leading to this problem**. "**The problem of the other minds**" is a specific example that highlights "**Solipsism**" which struggles to decide how one could determine whether every other being has a mind or is just like every other physical entity that our mind perceives. Having a much clearer understanding of the mind-body problem and how the mind and body affect each other could definitely play a huge role in discerning the mind and body of others. "**The problem of free will**" is also an extension of the mind-body problem because, if **my free will** is a feature of **my mind**, how would it have any **effect on the physical world**.

Over the years, many philosophers have had their take on this significant problem. Yet, even till date there is no one universally accepted solution and I fear that there may never be. Although we have made numerous strides in the field of science and the bridge between body and mind, we look no closer to solving the problem. But what excites me is the prospect that we might just be one discovery away from solving it. This problem can largely be related to walking along a dark tunnel with light at the very end of it. It looks almost impossible to reach and we will continue to think so until we ultimately take that step that leads us into the light. Descartes' solution to the problem was the **pineal gland**. He based his solution on the basis that every part of the brain was divided into two parts but our mind only had one thought. The only part of the brain with a multiplicity of one was the pineal gland which he claimed to be "the principal seat of the soul, and the place in which all our thoughts are formed." Thomas Huxley was one of the first philosophists to state that the conscious mind was a by-product of the brain that has no influence upon the brain. This position of the mind-body problem is called

Epiphenomenalism and is one of the more popular opinions and one which I closely agree with. The most powerful argument against epiphenomenalism is that it is self-contradictory: if we have knowledge about epiphenomenalism, then our brains know about the existence of the mind, but if epiphenomenalism were correct, then our brains should not have any knowledge about the mind, because the mind does not affect anything physical.

Brain Science is still in its infancy and we are in no position to claim that science has failed to solve the mind-body problem. It is possible that modern brain science may make some progress in delineating how consciousness arises in the brain, and thereby will lead to further understanding. It is uncertain that such progress will ultimately lead to a solution to the mind-body problem. As we proceed forward, each new theory accounting to a step in the right direction, we may finally reach the light at the end of this very long tunnel and solve the problem that has haunted mankind for millennia.