

Assignment1

CGS601

Nikhil Mehta
190549

Ques: What might be the relationship between the mind and the brain? Elaborate and comment citing different possible theoretical approaches to look at this problem.

Being a computer science student, the best analogy to mind and brain that I think and read is a computer system where the brain is the entire hardware present and the mind is software which is engraved on the hardware. There is no physical existence of the brain. Brain(hardware) is made up of blood vessels and nerve cells whereas there is no physical interpretation of the brain as such and is sometimes considered to be a non physical entity.

One of the other approaches that is widely used to study the relationship between the two is by providing different levels of explanation, from ion channels to neural firing and so on. This approach helps to understand that ,what will be the effect on the next level from previous level. There are some debates for this approach because this does not clarify if the brain is influenced by the mind or vice versa. But hardware-software analogy gives a basic intuition for this problem.

One of the fundamental things that can't be understood from any of these is consciousness although as stated by different authors that most of the behaviour is performed without being apparently conscious.

Qualia([Wiki](#)): There are explanations for many types of qualia (like the sight of color red) but some qualia like(why red feels red, why a rewarding touch gives a feeling of pleasure). The first one is usually explained by processing information from our sensory systems and some complex processing in the brain.

There are different perspectives to study psychology and two famous ones are dualism (both exist) and monism (believes only one of the two exists) and they may be further classified "who controls who" or "which of the two". Biologists argue that there is no mind as there is no physical structure associated with it, behaviourists believe that only stimulus and response should be studied and even if mind exists, it cannot be studied scientifically and this should not be considered. One of the famous events that support dualism and cannot be explained by biologists is the **hypnosis** phenomenon. Explained by Hilgard and Orne's experiment as follows:

- They were put in a half-conscious state and were hypnotised that they would be touched with red-hot iron but were touched with a pencil. But they still had **skin reaction**.
- Similar kinds of results were obtained when the subjects were hypnotised to control pain and they felt less pain.

The above experiments contradict the theory of monism and thus support the idea of dualism. Dualism argues that dualism is necessary for free will which requires cause of our action not to be governed by natural laws and says that mind is not a physical entity which should follow the laws and thus give rise to free will.

The debate between the relationship of mind and brain exists since Aristotle and is still inconclusive and may remain unsolved for a long time.

References:

1. McLeod, S. A. (2018, February 05). *Mind body debate*. Simply Psychology. <https://www.simplypsychology.org/mindbodydebate.html>
2. Nivelleau, Charles-Édouard. Métraux, Alexandre. (2015) The Bounds of Naturalism: A Plea for Modesty. *Philosophia Scientiae*. DOI: **10.4000/philosophiascientiae.1124**
3. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1516-4446-2017-2342>