



DISCOVERY SERIES – SEVEN

Mind/Body Dualism

1. Is there a holistic functional unity in the construction of humans between mind/body?
2. If a functional unity exists, is there nevertheless a duality of immaterial soul/spirit and material body setting aside the question of whether the soul/spirit are the same or different, can it be acknowledged that the soul/spirit is an immaterial component different from the body?

PRELIMINARY ISSUES

1. Is a human made of only one component, says matter, or is a human made of two components, such as matter and mind?
2. If matter and mind are two components, do these two interact, and if so, how does this interaction take place?

Two Views

1. Physicalism claims a human being is only made up of body. It does not deny the existence of the brain, but draws a distinction between the brain and the mind.
2. Dualism draws a distinction between the brain and the mind.

According to Physicalists, no material thing presupposes or requires reference to consciousness for it to exist. The rub comes when we move into the realm of sensations: experiences of colors, sounds, smells, tastes, textures, pains, itches, etc. Additionally, there are things called propositional attitudes which describe having a certain attitude toward a state of affairs by means of a proposition that can be expressed by a “*that clause*.” For example, one can hope, desire, fear, dread, wish, think, and believe certain propositions. *Propositional Attitudes* have at least three components:

- 1) There is a state of affairs toward which the attitude is directed
- 2) There is the attitude itself

3) They all have a context or a meaning imbedded in the propositional attitude.

ARGUMENTS SUPPORTING PROPERTY AND SUBSTANCE DUALISM

Physical events and properties do not have the same features that hold for mental events and properties. One's thoughts, feelings, and pain or sensory experience do not have any weight, are not located anywhere in space (one's thought about a peanut is not any closer to one's right toe than one's left toe). If a doctor touches part of the brain with an electrode, it may cause a certain mental or physical reaction. All that proves is that the mind is causally connected to the brain, not that they are identical. Sound is stored on a CD but it is not the same as the CD.

It is possible to be somewhat wrong in one's mental conclusions. For example, one may be wrong if one believes that there is a chair in the next room. If there is no chair in the next room, one is wrong factually. However, the person is not wrong in his/her sincere belief that there is a chair in the next room. The former claim is about the physical object. The latter is about a mental state within a person.

The substance argument is a hard argument to use against dualism. The subjective feel or texture of experience itself is a serious difficulty for Physicalists. For example, suppose a deaf scientist became the world's leading expert on the neurology of hearing. It would be possible for him to know and describe everything involved in the physical aspects of hearing. However, something different would still be left out of what the Scientist knows – the experience of what it is like to be a human who hears.

FIRST PERSON PERSPECTIVE is the vantage point used to describe the world from one's own point of view. "INDEXICALS" or words like "I, here, now, then, and there," are such examples of words we use on an everyday basis. "Here and now" are where and when I am. "There and then" are where and when I am not. INDEXICALS refer to one's own self due to the fact that we are all aware of life from our own perspective.

When it comes to morality, if physicalism is followed, it is hard to make sense of moral obligation and responsibility. It could not be said that anyone "ought" to risk their life to save a baby trapped in a burning building. Common sense notions of freedom, moral obligation, and responsibility are no more.

CONCLUSION: While Ockham's Razor states that people should not multiply entities beyond what is needed to explain something, if Ockham's Razor is understood to be the guiding principle in this debate, it becomes question-begging when applied to matters of relative merits.

