

The Place of the Mind in Human Existence

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Abstract

This work has studied, and has further criticized the place of the mind as posited by the monists and the dualists especially as in the treaties of Spinoza and Rene Descartes. Man is a being that possesses body and mind, and as such makes his decisions in line with the state of his mind, and for this reason, this piece, has further expanded the nature, meaning, attribute, and the place of the mind in human existence. This piece makes use of analogies in order to make the work more appreciable by the reader.

Keywords: Mind; Immaterial; Process; Body; Information; Knowledge

Introduction

Debate over the mind-body relationship is not a new occurrence in philosophy as an academic field of study, hence the many complexities associated with the subject. Various philosophers posit various views about the mind-body relationship. In ancient philosophy, mind and body formed one of the classic dualism, and many philosophers including Plato, Aristotle, Spinoza and Rene Descartes, have written explicitly about this subject, and others like the pre-Socratic philosophers have written treatises that could easily be applied to the discourse of the mind-body relationship [1].

In the face of the debate over the mind-body relationship, some scholars argue that the mind and the body are the same substance, while others argue that the mind and the body are separate substances.

This incongruity between the positions of these philosophers has resulted in disagreement among philosophy scholars as to what the position and essence of the mind is in human existence. This paper thus evaluates the arguments by these philosophers in order to ascertain the position of the mind in human existence.

Mind: A Philosophical Discourse

At the mention of the word "mind", one begins to wonder and ask questions like "what is mind?" "Where is it?" "What does it look like?" These questions have boggled the minds of philosophy scholars for a while now. In his book "Ethics", Spinoza argues that, "The mind and the body are ontologically the same thing, the same reality or substance and are inseparable from each other". The mind is as such united to the body because; the body is the "object" of the mind. Descartes on his own part argues that the mind and the body are separate substances, and are independent realities, each able to exist without the other.

However, considering the argument of Spinoza, it is obvious that he substantiated and materialized the mind, making it appear to be a physical entity as it is evident in his words "the body is the object of the mind", but this as such is not true in reality. The mind is a continuous immaterial mental process which takes place in the body. The mind as

a continuous immaterial process is developed and sustained by knowledge and information, and as such is perceptual, in that, it is developed by various knowledge and information. The mind by virtue of being a mental process also accrues to itself the ability of thought, consciousness and emotion, but this process cannot exist without inhering in a living body, for the mind cannot exist in a vacuum, but in a living body in order to be activated. In other words, the mind exists, and can only exist in so far as the body is a living body. Monists posits that the mind and the body are attributes of one fundamental substance, in other words, the mind is the body revealing itself in another form and vice versa, but this is an erroneous conclusion as far as the mind is concerned, this is because, the possibility of a bodily reality to reveal itself in an immaterial way or as in immaterial reality is slim in reality. Instead, the mind is an immaterial process and function performed in the body (brain), based on knowledge and information. The mind is neither the body nor an invisible eternal entity, instead, it is the personification of all of man's knowledge, which reveals itself in various ways, hence its characteristics and functions which ceases at death [2].

The mind is a latent process at an early stage of human life, and is thus inactive, but through knowledge and information stored in the brain as the human person grows, the mind is activated.

Analogously, the mind can be likened to a person who potentially possesses genius factors, but still needs intellectual knowledge in order to harness these factors, and become a genius in actuality, in like manner; the mind is activated by knowledge and information. The mind as a mental process is constantly created and recreated by information stored in the brain. One may be forced to ask thus, "If the mind is constantly created and recreated by information in the brain, does it mean that our consciousness consists in the information in the brain? When a person is conscious, he knows thus by virtue of the mind being a process of consciousness. A person knows that he is conscious because the mind, which possesses the ability "to know", is intrinsically and essentially, consciousness. In other words, a person being alert about him, is the same as the mind knowing about itself and its presence (The mind is a conscious consciousness). The mind can rightly be conceived as "the immaterial personification of the whole knowledge and information stored in the brain, which performs all mental functions". This as such makes the mind an entity of its own,

not eternal and not solely dependent on the brain (body), but on the whole information in the brain. It is however pertinent to point out that, even though the mind is an entity of its own, it cannot exist independent of the body-this is as opposed to the position of dualists, for if the brain does not store information with which the mind is developed and activated, the mind cannot exist. The mind as an immaterial entity reveals itself in various immaterial ways, hence its various characteristics like; rationality, feelings, consciousness, divisibility etc. [3].

Conclusion

The mind is an essential part of human existence. In fact, complete humanity consists in the presence of the mind. The presence of the mind as such, in human existence does not mean that the mind is

materially existent neither does it mean that the mind is an eternal entity, which affects or determines the body, instead the mind is an immaterial entity which reveals itself in many immaterial ways, hence, its attributes, and is immaterially present as far as the body lives. In others words, the mind cease to exist once the body dies. In more words by extension the mind cannot exist independent of the body.

References

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