

A Comparative Study and Analysis of the Concept of Mind in Indian and Western Philosophy, Its Implications on Neuroscience

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ABSTRACT

The concept of mind serves as a powerful tool in understanding the link between mind and brain. The mind has a special influence on neuroscience, so it can be said that the mind has an immense role in the discussion of neuroscience. In the present study, we will attempt to examine the impact of Indian and Western thinkers' conceptions of mind on neuroscience through a comparative discussion. I will also try to find out what different philosophical communities have discussed about the mind.

KEYWORD: Mind, neuroscience, heterodox, Orthodox, ancient Greek

INTRODUCTION

Manas is a highly complex faculty of human beings. It bears great importance in the origination of human knowledge and also in the field of spiritual sublimation and realization. The present study attempts to focus on a comparative study between Indian and Western thinkers who discuss about the mind. What is called "manas" in Indian philosophy is called 'mind' in Western philosophy. The word 'mind' fails to capture the total significance of the word "manas". Manas, in the Indian tradition, is postulated as an instrument of our knowledge. It is the inner sense-organ (antahkarana) which is totally different from the self or the Atman. But mind in Western tradition is treated as soul-substance. Most of the western thinkers possess the view that mind is a psyche and the study of mind is psychology. Knowledge, which is the province of mind is impossible unless there is consciousness. Hence, it follows that whatever is mental is consciousness. It is not out of place to mention that in Indian tradition Vedantins also assume knowledge etc. as the attribute of manas, though Nyaya-Vaisesika and others admit them as attributes of atman or self.

MIND IN INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

Ancient Indian writers divided philosophy into two classes: heterodox (nastika) and orthodox (astika). Orthodox schools, such as Nyaya, Vaisesika, Samkhya, Yoga, Mimamsa, and Vedanta, rely on Vedas' authority, while heterodox systems like Carvaka, Bauddha, and Jaina do not believe in the authority of Vedas.

THE CARVAKA VIEW OF MANAS :

The Carvaka is the sole representative of Indian materialism, a heterodox theory that does not draw its theories from the Vedas and Upanisads. Brhaspati is traditionally considered the founder of Indian

materialism, known as 'Barhaspatya-darsana' or 'Lokayatamata'. The Carvaka is considered the chief disciple of Brhaspati. There are no original works of Carvakas, except for Jayarashi Bhatta's 'Tattvopaplavasimha'. Understanding materialism is difficult due to its focus on discrediting rather than objectively presenting its tenets.

Krishna Misra in *Provodhachandradaya* summarizes the teachings of materialism, which focuses on the sources, nature, validity, and limits of human knowledge of reality. Materialists believe that perception is the only source of valid knowledge, and they reject manas as an internal sense. However, the Lokayatikas believe that manas must be different from other systems and be perceptually proved. They believe that manas is a product of a combination of elements (bhutas) sustained in a peculiar state.

The Carvaka system rejects the principle of causation, as it is not supported by sensuous perception. Consciousness is a material and transitory modification of these elements, and for the materialists, consciousness is produced in the body, which is a combination of four elements. The consciousness of the already perished body cannot be related to the new body which comes into being. Manas exists inside the body as an internal organ, and with the destruction of the body, it also perishes.

Manas is argued to be different in different bodies, as the theory of matter is unable to account for the fact of memory and recognition. The Lokayatikas argue that traces left by previous experiences can be transmitted from material cause to its direct product, such as the transference of the odor of musk to the cloth in contact with it. This view of the Carvakas has been severely criticized by the Nyaya-Vaisesika philosophers.

THE BAUDDHA VIEW OF MANAS

The Buddhist school, rooted in the no-self theory of Buddhist scriptures, focuses on the concept of manas, a psycho-physical complex. The teachings of Buddha are oral and recorded by his disciples, making it difficult to determine their exact teachings. Manas is seen as a momentariness of objects, with the four mental elements being Vijnana, Samjna, Samskara, and Vedana. Buddhist philosophers admit manas as an inner organ, but they are momentary.

The Bauddha philosophy, divided into four schools, focuses on the independent existence of nature and manas. The Vaibhasika and Sautrantika schools, both from the Hinayana sect, maintain direct realism and indirect realism. However, Buddhists deny the existence of a permanent entity like self or atman and view all mental phenomena through association. Manas, an internal sense-organ, plays a crucial role in perception, as it is a causal process involving an unpaired sense-organ, external visible forms, and attention. Dharmaklr̥ti defines four types of perceptual cognition: Indriya-jnana, Mono-vijnana, Svasasmvedana, and Yogi-Pratyaksa.

THE JAINA VIEW OF MANAS

The Jaina theory of knowledge and metaphysics explains that knowledge is the self-evolution of the self, with conditions and factors such as the object, sense, sense-object contact, and manas. The Jainas view knowledge as self-generated and self-evolved and do not divide the conditions of knowledge into subjective and objective aspects. The object, senses, and manas are considered as the aupacarika conditions of knowledge. The Jainas enumerates five senses of knowledge: visual, auditory, gustatory, olfactory, and tactile. Manas is considered a quasi-sense-organ, as it can take all objects and is not restricted to any particular time and place.

Jaina's philosophy distinguishes between atman and manas, with atman being the agent and manas being an instrument. Manas in Jainism has two aspects: physical and psychical. Physical manas are material atoms transformed into manas, while psychical manas are manifested when the self is destroyed. Manas serves as an instrumental cause and reduces to a physical aspect corresponding to the object.

THE NYAYA- VAISESIKA VIEW OF MANAS

The Nyaya-Vaisesika view of manas is similar to the Nyaya-Sutras, but emphasizes the ontological aspect. Manas is a substance (dravya) that signifies self-subsistence and the material cause of an effect. The Vaisesika philosophy admits nine substances: earth, water, fire, air, ether, time, space, spirit, and manas. The first four are eternal and transient, while the atman is eternal and all-pervading. Manas is the ninth substance, acting as both an internal sense-organ and a connecting link between the atman and external sense-organs.

Manas is a substance that comes into contact with external sense-organs, such as earth, water, fire, air, and ether. It is atomic and partless, possessing the quality of disjunction or separation and the quality of veṅga (speed). Manas sustains itself apart from the body and is the condition of internal perception and external cognition. It is the only substance with no touch-quality but endowed with action. The Vaisesika-sutra states that manas' substantiality and eternity are due to its capacity for conjunction, which produces cognition and other attributes.

THE SAMKHYA VIEW OF MANAS

Skhya philosophy is made up of two fundamental realities. They are purua (self) and prakti (primordial nature). Prakti is made up of three qualities (gunas), namely sattva, rajas, and tamas, which are either in equilibrium or out of balance. This gunas action results in evolution. The first evolutionary result is cosmic intellect (Buddhi). Ego is also an evolute of primal nature (prakti), manifesting through the supremacy of three guas.

Sāṃkhya philosophy posits that the mind evolves as a sattva aspect of attributes or guṇa-s, with five perception and motion organs. The subtle parts of sense perception evolve with the tamas aspect of three attributes, becoming an aspect of the mind itself. The mind also carries out the order of will and acts as an instrument in an individual's actions. Intelligence, consisting of all three guṇa-s, acts upon the individual.

THE YOGA PHILOSOPHY VIEW OF MANAS

Patanjali was a compiler and editor of yoga sutras, which were in practice for a long period. He codified all aspects of yoga in a treatise of 195 terse sutras, which included the concept of 'yoga' in various senses. The word 'yoga' appears in Rigveda in many senses, but it may be appropriate to apply it in the way Gita and Kathopanishad refer to it: indriyani hayanahuh visayatāsugocharan'. The Yoga Sutra focuses on the importance of meditation.

There are many different forms of yoga, Hatha Yoga places emphasis on exterior exercises that prime the body for Raja Yoga. the most well-known of which being Raja Yoga, which holds that the only way to strengthen one's inner energies is by self-exercise rather than outside intervention. In contrast The essential prerequisites before practicing yoga include tapas, swadhyaya, and Ishwara pranidhana. The regular course recommended by Patanjali comprises eight limbs (Ashtanga): Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama,

Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana, and Samadhi. These exercises contribute to physical firmness, emotional poise, and intellectual clarity.

Yoga refers to an important characteristic of the mind, which sometimes tends towards good or bad, liberation, and samsara. The teleology principle of material prakriti states that it should produce both good and bad in man. The good part is never lost as it is the mind's innate tendency to enjoy pleasures of life. Yoga is an important healing method in alternative systems of medicine or complementary medicine, particularly in Ayurveda, which uses the principles of yoga psychology. It brings harmony of the body, mind, and spirit, and is aimed at self-realization with a meditative mind.

UPANISHAD VIEWS OF MIND

The Vedic India's Upanishads, a philosophical treatise, focused on the mind itself as the medium of knowing, a departure from earlier Vedic thinkers. This shift towards the 'within' in quest of the Absolute marked a significant departure from earlier Vedic thinkers. The Mandukyopanishad addresses different layers of consciousness, including waking, dream, and dreamless sleep states. Beyond these is the fourth state called 'turiya', which is consciousness itself. In this state, the observer's atman prevails over the body and mind.

The Upanishad also discusses the law of spiritual progression, with Bhrigu's Doctrine of five Kosa stating that the mental plane occupies the third stage in human evolution, followed by bliss or joy. The theory, known as the 'Pancha Kosa', consists of five sheaths, starting with food and progressing to the mind, intellect, and finally bliss. The human evolution is not yet complete, with the supramental stage being the greatest event. The supramental life will have a divine body, unlike human life, and the mind seeks knowledge but eludes it. In the vignana maya state, the mind's shackles break, allowing knowledge to burst in, marking the highest state of evolution yet to arrive.

MIND IN WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

Our minds, a recent idea, have ties to the old times of the Middle Ages, Greeks, and Romans. René Descartes made it famous to think that we are a mix of mind and body. He thought our mind is something we can't touch but can live on after our bodies stop. This Cartesian dualism has influenced contemporary viewpoints, and although there are similarities with earlier accounts, modern scholars often see earlier philosophers as proto-Cartesians or contribute to the solution of Cartesian problems. This approach does not fully understand the ideas of ancient and medieval authors, as Descartes' agenda differs from Plato's and differs from the works of Aristotle, Epicurus, Chrysippus, Plotinus, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and John Buridan.

The ancient Greek concept of soul, or psyche, was used to differentiate between living and dead things. It was related to breath and had degrees corresponding to different states of consciousness. A dead man lost his psyche, while a sleeping or fainting man lost enough to lose consciousness. The soul is composed of light and tenuous matter, identified with pure elements like air or fire. Pre-Socratic thinkers would have understood the expression "he breathed his last" as the exhalation of the soul. If the psyche could exist in a disembodied state, it would have been in a shadowy or ephemeral form.

Plato, an ancient or medieval philosopher, introduced the concept of the soul in his philosophical works, dividing it into its capacities. He introduced a dualist account of the soul, arguing that it is more in common with cosmic and divine realms than with the body. Plato's later works focused on the soul's role in moral conflict and human action, identifying three distinct parts: reason, passion, and appetite. Reason rules the

soul with wisdom, while appetite is the irrational part that loves, hungers, thirsts, and feels the flutter and titillation of other desires. Passion intervenes to help reason subdue appetite, allowing reason to control the soul. Plato's model emphasizes the importance of rationality and the denigration of appetite as irrational forces that threaten our well-being. He saw no redeeming value for emotions in human moral life, although anger could sometimes be placed in the service of reason.

Aristotle's treatise on the soul, *Peri psyche*, views the soul as a natural phenomenon, dividing it into vegetative powers (nutrition and growth), sensory powers (vision, hearing, taste, smell, and touch), and intellectual powers (understanding, assertion, and discursive thinking). He categorized life forms into plants, brute animals, and humans, with higher forms subsuming lower powers. Aristotle's intellect is a perfection of the organic unity of body and soul, and thinking cannot occur without sensory images.

The Hellenistic period was a time of significant philosophical activity, with most primary sources lost. Scholars have gathered information from fragments of texts and reports from other philosophers, including Epicurus (341-270 b.c.e.). Epicurus revitalized the materialist doctrine of Democritus, arguing that the soul is composed of light and mobile atoms, causing spontaneity of sensation and human free choice. He also argued that death is nothing to Epicureans, as it is not present when we exist.

The Stoics, a Hellenistic school, believed in a unitary soul composed of air and fire, with the soul regulating various bodily functions. They believed humans are higher because they can assent to or reject impressions, and language is imprinted by thought. Neoplatonism, a movement combining Platonic and Aristotelian perspectives, was a significant development, with Plotinus introducing the concept of "seminal reasons" and later Christian thinkers like St. Augustine.

Medieval thinking about the mind was influenced by religious doctrine and physical access to ancient texts. The belief that God created the world from nothing was prevalent in Christian, Islamic, and Jewish monotheistic traditions. This doctrine emphasized the importance of the human soul and cognition, reflecting divine nature. Augustine, a significant medieval philosopher, emphasized the importance of the human mind as a manifestation of the truth of Genesis 1:26, and the doctrine of the Trinity. He believed that the mind is three aspects in one substance, and that knowing itself allows it to know God. St. Thomas Aquinas, a Christian theologian, synthesized pagan and Christian philosophical learning, arguing that the soul is a special form and substance, and can continue to exist after the body's death. After Aquinas, philosophers shifted their focus from the soul's nature to its functions, reducing theories about the soul's essential nature. John Buridan, a philosopher, believed that there is no philosophical knowledge of the soul, but acknowledged its faculties and operations. This marked the beginning of modernity and the distinction between faith and reason.

IMPLICATION ON NEUROSCIENCE

Studies prove that our brain is the powerhouse for all our thoughts and words. Still, this might lead us to focus excessively on mental health's bodily aspects. Dealing with mental health care, patients encounter a variety of complications. Feelings, health, ideas, connections, and spiritual concerns all have a role. We must perceive the patient as a complete individual, not simply a collection of symptoms. There's more to our health and life than what we can see, touch, or hear about. It stretches beyond limits. Treating mental illness isn't just about tests and manuals. Facts and research are important in medicine, but we can't forget the big picture in mental health.

The Indian and Western philosophy ideas about the mind have links to brain science. Both philosophies view the mind as the wellspring of all experiences. They hold that we can employ the mind to tap into and

comprehend the universe's core workings. This viewpoint about the mind has implications for brain science, implying that the mind is an influential implement to become aware of how the brain works. Neuroscience uses the idea of the mind to examine how the brain and mind interact. Looking at the mind from both Indian and Western perspectives can give researchers valuable knowledge. They can grasp how the brain and mind impact each other. Then, they can check out how the brain might change the way the mind works and vice versa. This two-way communication could be the gateway to making modifications in both mind and brain functionality.

CONCLUSION

In Indian thought, they see the mind and matter as one and the same in learning, but Western thought separates them. Indian thought uses the mind to become aware, but in Western thought, the mind is both the learner and what is being learned. Both methods work together to understand ourselves and reach happiness and freedom. Both the Indian and Western thinkers have created mind theories to explain how we create meaning from our surroundings.

Okay, let's talk about two stories - one from India, another from the West. The theory from India revolves around karma, a thought that says our past and surroundings shape us. Basically, our karma shapes what we will think or do in the future. On the other hand, Western theory heavily values dualism. It tells us that the mind and body are separate. This means our values and beliefs help us make conscious choices.

Let's look at the theory of mind - a common topic in both Indian and Western beliefs. Each has some overlap but also unique views. The former is heavily swayed by the karma idea, while the latter is more fixated on the dualism idea. At their core, both methods strive to unfold how we perceive and decode the world around us, and apply across different cultural backdrops.

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