



Against the Thesis of Biological Reductionism

Abstract: Biological reductionism identifies mental processes with neurobiological processes in the brain. This assumption is question-begging, because the system of thought does not obey physical or natural laws as it should if it were a product of the brain. The crucial term is *function* whose definitions are conducive to refute this reductionistic view. Mind is not a product of matter since mind is capable of transcending the functional system of the organism, especially the inherent limitations of the brain.

Thesis:

Thinking and knowledge are the product of a biological organ, the brain, and are therefore fashioned by evolution for brutally pragmatic purposes.

Refutation:

This thesis can be refuted easily, since it destroys its own ontological foundation.

If we assume thinking to be a function of a biological and therefore physical system, we are forced, by this argument, to limit the capacity of thinking to the field of operability of this function within the biologically preset boundaries of the neuro-physiological system called brain. A function that grew by nature's selective evolution must inexorably be bound to the limits of the organic system within which this function is operative. The function is dependent on the system, it cannot transcend the system itself.

The term *function* may have several connotations[1]:

- i. the action for which a person or thing is specially fitted or used or for which a thing exists : purpose
- ii. any of a group of related actions contributing to a larger action; esp. the normal and specific contribution of a bodily part to the economy of a living organism
- iii. variable (as a quality, trait, or measurement) that depends on and varies with another, e.g. height is a function of age; also : result, e.g. illnesses that are a function of stress.
- iv. function implies a definite end or purpose that the one in question serves or a particular kind of work it is intended to perform
- v. in physiology and psychology: performance and mode of activity of a bodily or psychic organ
- vi. in mathematics and logic: a mathematical correspondence that assigns exactly one element of one set to each element of the same or another set
- vii. functionalism: an answer to the mind-body problem. It defines mental states and properties in terms of what causes them, how they manifest themselves in behavior and how they interact with each other. (s. H. Putnam: states of consciousness are functions of the nervous system, especially of cerebral processes).

Definitions (i), (ii) and (iv) in particular contribute to the assumption that a function is embedded within a whole, a system. A function does not possess self-motivation or self-causation. It is strictly subject to natural laws and completely determined by them. Thus if thinking or knowledge is a function of a natural system, it must necessarily obey the laws of that

system. This conclusion, however, is absurd: thinking would be completely determined and notions such as "free will" or "responsibility" could not be conceived reasonably. This is brute behaviorism, the human being as a machine.

If the above thetic assumption is true, why is it possible for us, to transcend these functional limits of the system in the very act of thought itself? Although we confess that most people never overcome the natural pragmatism of their thinking, we nevertheless have numerous examples of great human thinkers that excelled mediocrity and thus pragmatism by far. They were capable of extending their capacity of thinking into speculative and mystical realms. Philosophy is no means for survival. Never would a biological system have devised such a useless function. If thinking were only a product of the nature of the brain, it would never be possible within the given laws of nature to transcend the system's functionality. There is enough proof that thought CAN transcend the narrow set of functions of the brain. The reason that we can have thoughts going beyond the biological restraints of our brain, proves the immateriality and independence of our mind from matter.

Mind is not a product of matter. Neither are they functioning independently of each other. Mind is independent in so far as it does not depend ontologically on the existence of matter, but mind needs the brain to express itself through the human body and to give us an extended set of instruments for living in this world. This set of instruments, such as understanding , reason, emotions etc. are possibilities to transcend the biological nature of the human species, to go beyond the state of animality, to attain the special dignity of a homo sapiens.

[1] Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 10th Edition

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Updated: 6/10/06