

UNIT - IV

B

Mind-Body Problem : Interactionism, Parallelism and the Identity Theory.

Q. 1. Explain the arguments generally advanced in support of interactionism. Explain and evaluate the objections raised against the theory.

SEM-3; CC-5

Or, Find out the nature and content of the theory of Interactionism.

Ans. According to the theory of Interactionism, there is a causal relation between physical event and mental event. A physical event can cause a mental event and similarly a mental event can influence a physical event. For example, when we have bleeding in any part of our body, we feel pain and when we have any pleasurable experience or feeling we start laughing. In this way we can say that our body can influence our mind and our mind also can influence our body. So, our mind and body are related to each other in the relation of interaction. Common people accept this relation of interaction between mind and body. The medium of this interaction between mind and body is our brain.

The main advocate of this theory is French philosopher Descartes. According to him, mind and body are substances with completely opposite features. Body has extension but mind is extensionless. Body does not have consciousness but mind is conscious in nature. So we find oppositeness in mind and body. Though there is oppositeness between mind and body these two can influence each other through penial gland in our brain.

The main defect of this theory is that this theory has considered mind and body as opposite but this theory admits a close interaction between the two. But they cannot explain clearly how this interaction between two opposite substances can take place. But in reply to this objection it can be said that this objection can only be raised if we take the ideas of causation in a narrow sense. According to John Hospers if we take it for granted that an event cannot cause another without

making any influence on it, then the event of interaction between mind and body will remain indistinct and obscure. Because if a substance has to act upon another, then both of them have to become physical objects. But cause may have many kinds. There may be such causal relation where no events of causal relations remain present or if there are any such relation it is very difficult to realise. Even in case of physical objects there may be events of acting on other objects. But these events are very difficult to realise because these happen very distantly. For example, according to the Law of Gravitation, different stars and planets attract each other. But this event of attraction is very difficult to realise. When a moving ball hits a static ball and makes it moving, then we can easily understand the event of action. Similarly we can understand the event of gravitation. From this viewpoint we can say that there may be causal relations without any action or influence on the effect. Because, no connection or conjunction between cause and effect can be perceived. Besides, there are many cases in which we can know the particular cause of particular effect. But in those cases we do not know how a cause create an effect. In these cases we cannot say that cause acts upon the effect. Similar things can take place in case of the causal relation between mind and body.

Besides, the theory of interactionism is not consistent with the Law of Conservation of Energy which is an established principle of Physics. According to this principle, the total amount of energy present in this universe is always same. It can never increase or decrease. According to interactionism our body acts upon our mind and causes change. Similarly our mind acts upon our body and causes change. Mind can exhaust its energy for creating change in the body. For example, if mind expresses will for moving physical organ, then some energy of the mind will be exhausted for expressing will. Similarly, there will be creation of new energy in the body. In that case, mental energy will be exhausted and physical energy will be gained. But the amount of both mental and physical energy will always remain same. This is the main content of the principle of Conservation of Energy. Besides we can only think when our brain cells become active and exercise some of their powers. Here the power of our brain is exhausted for creating mental process of thinking. So our physical power becomes less or decreased. But as per the above principle the total amount of physical power remains unchanged.

But it can be said here that when physical power is converted to mental energy then physical power is decreased and mental power is increased as well. Similarly, when mental energy creates physical energy then mental energy becomes less and physical energy is increased. So, the total quantity of energy becomes unchanged but one energy changed into another only. Thus, if we admit the universality or undestructibility of energy, then we must admit that mind and body are not totally different because in that one cannot be transformed into another. ✓✓

Q. 2. Find out the main content of Parallelism as a theory of mind-body relation.