

The search for New Philosophy (From Language to Mind)

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Background

Philosophy which has been the discourse of rational inquiry has witnessed centuries of changes both internally necessitated and externally influenced since Greek philosophy of Socrates , Plato and Aristotle and even since their predecessors too. The rise of Copernican Revolution, Archimedes and Galileo's astronomical telescope which led not only to bring up the foundational change of heliocentric theory motivating succeeding philosophers like Newton but also, had impacted in the journey of philosophy as philosophy was not void of natural philosophy which later branched off to today's natural sciences particularly physical sciences. The empirical observations of Darwin to form his evolutionary theories also have influenced the growth of philosophy. Besides mathematics which has played a significant role in rationalizing philosophy, the notion of rationalism versus empiricism debate still persists today which marks the fundamental issue of discussion between a priori analytic truth and a posteriori synthetic truth which has been addressed thoroughly by Kant. The rise of Descartes till the end of Kant could be considered philosophically very enlightening in the view of modern western world which is also due to Renaissance period, but after Kant's era, the emergence of Newtonian classical physics particularly his theory of Gravity had moved the world and disturbed the problem of Descartes' mind-body dualism through Newtonian non-contact mechanics which went against contact-mechanics of Descartes. From Newton to Einstein, the world and science have phenomenally changed and matured to such an extent that classical physics is almost overtaken by modern physics and even further by quantum mechanics , elementary particle physics and strings theory. Since the end of Newton who was philosopher , mathematician and alchemist, the study of philosophy became a more segmented rational inquiry void of natural philosophy or physics and, thus , the departure of philosophy from physics started and thereby, natural sciences got drifted away from the then holistic rational inquiry though could get along with mathematics to some extent. This drifting away has later become a valid point of weakness in understanding the nature of fundamental of rational inquiry which is done by human and the fundamentals which make an attempt to do so could be strongly possible to study if today's drifted philosophy could be unified with today's advanced modern science particularly in modern physics and the possibility of such unification would lead to the emergence of new approach of rational inquiry which could be coined as the need for New Philosophy.

Motivation

The need for New Philosophy which could be a come back experiment of bringing back the holistic rational inquiry of the then pre-Newtonian era and this possibility could perhaps be done at least in more than one way but one approach of inquiry which is of interest in this paper is to expound the notion of study of human mind via human language and distinguishing human language from non-human language in understanding the discussion on 'From Language to Mind', the understanding of human language per se which could be done by differentiating its uniqueness from other sub-human or non-human species languages if at all if non-humans also have languages which could be found empirically, which would be discussed needs fundamental issues to be addressed and the addressing of such issues is possible when there is a unification of different disciplines which are required in the study of the rational inquiry such as brain sciences , linguistics , psychology , genetics and biological evolution besides physics. The unification process is the utmost motivating factor as the modern science particularly in modern physics awaits the unification of four interactions such as for quantum gravity and black holes to understand Universe, besides strings theory using topology and many dimensional physics to study Universe which consists of almost 95% dark matter which is not known to man. The search of Einstein's Theory of Everything could be a motivating force behind the unification of brain sciences and linguistics in particular by using genetics too in understanding human language. The role of physics in human language is difficult to think of but perhaps could be found in understanding the role of biophysics in unlocking the mystery behind protein unfolding of the gene responsible for human speech and this attempt could be a matter of discussion based on scientifically observed empirical data. The more motivating factor besides the unification process for philosophy is also the fact that in understanding mind and language, one can not do so by being in a compartmentalized manner which has evolved as a result in the last almost two centuries in the form of analytic philosophy by taking some help from mathematics and value laden philosophy namely continental philosophy. The more becoming redundancy of the branched off two schools of the then undivided philosophy i.e. analytic and continental philosophy of today which are primarily due to its inability and also its internal rigidity from not accepting and even not making an attempt to understand the development of advanced modern physics ,chemistry and biology, have not only made the discourse of philosophy in today's 21st century draggy but also have failed to get themselves updated and understood in the context of the modern scientific era where in, even the Einsteinian physics is almost critiqued by many including quantum mechanics and strings theory and in such scenario, making an attempt to bring unification process possible and working in those disciplines which are responsible for understanding language per se would not only be merely a revolutionary change in the discourse of rational inquiry but also would bring back the real essence of what philosophy could be, hence , the need for New Philosophy.

From Language to Mind (the search for New Philosophy)

After having been gone through the understanding of what is the search or the aim of the paper and why the search or the aim is required in a sense of what is the reason of motivating to project such aim in the previous sections in the form of background and motivation discussing about what and why the project is respectively, the solution or the methodology or perhaps , the approach is needed and this question of – how the project or the aim could be understood is what it is going to be discussed hereafter.

From language to mind signifies the significance of knowing mind which is human mind in this case via language which is in turn human language , but the issue is, mind could be known through a medium which is nothing but language and the next obvious question is , it is prior to the knowing of mind , one needs to know its medium i.e. language , hence , the natural urge to ask what language is.

To define what language is, is normally not discussed in the time of Descartes and his predecessors in the manner it is discussed today, simply because of their accepted notion of language being only specific to human which is the only rational being with mind and hence , no other being has mind. This has led to Cartesian dualism of body and mind distinguishing man from brutes and animals also. The issue has become a means of developing Turing's machine in the form of Artificial Intelligence challenging the mind of human that machines too can think like humans, which later gets criticized and rejected by philosophers of mind. The question is, is mind per se only specific to human or can not mind be attributable to non-human species ? To enable to reply to this question , one needs to understand its medium which is language , but the larger question in language too could be asked in similar manner to mind, asking , is language per se specific to human only and not to other non-human species and if so, then it is needed to be found empirically and if that is possible, then there is a further need to split and pin-pointedly find that part of language which is specific and unique to human only , thus , there is a requirement of zooming in by getting the focus right on the smallest region of language which remains only in humans.

The natural urge to now ask is, what is this language ? Hence, there is a shift in the methodology from faculty of mind to faculty of language. But , what is this faculty of language and how can it be understood? Analogously , to make an attempt to understand neutrino from its observed phenomenon in the form of effects visible to experimental particle physicists in the form of the counter results or in the form of some graphs given by super-computers , physicists' attempt to

realize and understand naively in Popperian manner is extremely difficult , simply because human eyes are tuned to macro-sized objects governed by classical mechanics of Newton and are not made for observing elementary particles ruled by quantum mechanics. But, there is a complex approach of zooming down to study neutrino to really know what neutrino is and getting an inspiration from such experimental particle physics laboratory , one too could think of after analyzing the language usage in space and time , socio-cultural contexts i.e. functional perspective besides going through evolutionary features in phylogenetic perspective , genetic and environmental factors in ontogenetic perspective , psychological or physiological factors in mechanistic perspective , or minds being emergent properties of brains , one could also go for cognitive neuroscience in trying to find out what language is. It could also be exciting to use modern physics to study language . But , the larger issue is, which method is to be used or which approach is to be applied or whether the application of the complex fields of study if applied could produce some better result or not and this last notion of complex analysis of combined existing disciplines perhaps carries an underlying unity which is fundamental for unification , is possibly the best fit approach to unlock the quest – what language is.

Darwin's evolutionary theory which led to his acceptance of continuity thesis of showing the evolution of human species had gone against the discontinuity thesis of Descartes who propounded the mind-body dualism and the notion of human being only has rational mind. Later, Darwin's science has been treated as pseudo science by his predecessors in the field of evolutionary biology. There are philosophers who have been debating following the traditional line of Internalist and Externalist debate for language in the form of modern philosophers such as Noam Chomsky for Internalist approach and philosophers like Quine , Davidson and Wittgenstein for Externalist approach. The aim here is to understand the unique features of language which are specific to human only and in doing so, the notion of Chomsky which is scientific and based on the developments of modern physics , chemistry and biology besides his urge for searching the unification process of disciplines like cognitive psychology , neurobiology , genetics and linguistics or bio-linguistics ,etc. which are required in understanding language, needs to be discussed as his standpoint rests on the results of updated modern science based on empirical data.

Human language if one goes back to proto-language (the fictitious language used by proto-human or direct ancestor of human before human language in evolutionary line) is unique but when looked closely, its uniqueness is so complex to be found but when looked grossly in a superficial manner, ordinarily , it is considered to be unique from other animals or non-human beings but when observed empirically, it has been found that there are so many similarities in terms of DNA and genetic code with other nearer animals in evolutionary line besides having some functional organs responsible for human speech and language in other animals like birds

but do not function like human's organs. Thus, despite such similarities, an attempt to find a set of unique features or a unique feature is so complex and for that, simply, the notion of recurring could not be used but there is a requirement of finding the least elements of the set which is going to make up the faculty of human language possible and to do that, that smallest unique region which Chomsky calls as Minimalist Program needs to be identified and cornered by applying Cartesian criterion or conceptually the notion of mind-body dualism which here means, finding out that unique part or region or portion which is unique and specific to human only. After the application of Cartesian criterion, Duhem-Quine thesis is required as it is impossible to test a scientific hypothesis in isolation. This test is required to expand the understanding of language per se which needs a scientific validation and approval. Thus, the search for the minimal region of language which is specific and unique to human is the need for the Minimalist Program of Chomsky and the possibility of such search is bound to be found if Chomsky's dream of unification process becomes successful and hence, the unified theory of language could be the hope .

Conclusion

The question of, what language per se which is specific and unique to human is, is not only going to understand mind of human per se but also, is going to unlock the mystery of missing link between homo-sapiens and other nearest relatives of human in its evolutionary line, and also is making an attempt to understand the languages of non-human species and other beings too. Thus, the hard core walled of body-mind dualism or Descartes' notion of mind being only unique to man could be challenged if mind becomes attributable to any species using language is found empirically but again, unless the question of what mind per se is, is known, such proclamation is bound to be so complex.

References

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