SUMMARY

An Introduction to Mind and Matter:
Ontology of The Order of Mind

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The mind-body debate dates back to Ancient Greece, but it was Descartes who formulated it as we know it best today by positing that the body is matter that occupies space, whereas the mind is a nonspatial entity. Cartesian dualism thus divides the world into two different kinds of substances, giving rise to the difficult problem of how these different substances or entities, body and mind, interact.

In response, modern philosophy has offered three views: material monism, mental monism, and neutral monism. Similar views obtain in the contemporary philosophy of mind, with material monism the most prevalent. This belief that physical explanations exist for all mental or spiritual phenomena, just as they do for the order of material substance, gained ground with the advance of the natural sciences and the growing dominance of the naturalistic worldview which holds that science can explain everything in the world.

Material monism encompasses behaviorism, identity theory, functionalism, and anomalous monism, among other positions. Against these, exponents of the uniqueness of the mental and spiritual order oppose the criticism that it is impossible to explain the understanding of meaning physically. This paper demonstrates that language takes on meaning through an inner process of self-understanding entirely unlike the work of understanding the nature of matter from the outside. Heidegger made a methodological principle of phenomenology, arguing that the state-of-Being that is peculiar to human existence (Dasein) must be articulated in terms of self-understanding. Reflection on such Heideggerian concepts enables us to comprehend the act of hermeneutic understanding in more depth.