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John E. Joseph. *Language. Mind and Body: A Conceptual History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017/2020. X + 282p. £ 88.99 / 23.99 (hardback/paperback).

The question “Where is language?” spearheads John E. Joseph’s daring expedition into the history of ideas about language, mind, and body. “The classic modernist answer [...] is that it is in the mind,” asserts Joseph, “and the answer to ‘Where is mind?’ is that it is in the brain” (23). Joseph's undertaking leads him to unearth "alternative accounts" to this typically modern construal of the question within the history of linguistic ideas “connecting language directly to the body – including the brain, the nervous system, the organs of speech production and sense perception, and potentially such extensions as the blind person’s cane” (ix).

The book’s main body presents multifarious discussions about language, mind, and body from antiquity to the present day, proceeding chronologically through six historical chapters focused upon key authors, philosophers, linguists, and researchers of medical science from antiquity (e.g. pre-Socratics; Plato; Aristotle; ancient medicine), the Middle Ages (e.g. Galenic medicine; Augustine; Avicenna; Aquinas; discussions on angelic language), the Renaissance (e.g. Shakespeare; early modern medicine; Descartes; Gassendi; Locke), the eighteenth century (e.g. Hartley; Condillac; Rousseau; literature on reflex and aphasia; Reid), the nineteenth century (e.g. Fichte; nationalism and race; brain

localization [Broca, Wernicke]; Bain; Egger; Saussure; discussions on the concept of the native speaker), and the twentieth century (e.g. Bloomfield; Piaget; Vygotsky; Jakobson; Merleau-Ponty; Chomsky; Lakoff & Johnson). The next chapter discusses the notions of abstract and concrete language throughout the history of linguistic ideas.

Joseph astutely demonstrates his guiding question's richness and fecundity in the book's opening chapter by reproducing a conversation between two PhD students. "All linguists agree on one thing, that linguistics is about analysing languages", said a Linguistics PhD student to a Philosophy PhD student, "[b]ut some of them", he went on, "think languages are in here, in the mind, and the others think they're out there, in the world" (5). Thus the question "Where is language?" not only relates to the body/mind divide or to localizing linguistic functions in any specific bodily organ or cerebral area, but also evokes a debate of an entirely different order, essential to twentieth-century linguistics, on language's intersubjective, collective, social nature. While the "internalist" camp in this ongoing debate generally holds a strictly bio-cognitive perspective highlighting the speaker's competence, the "externalist" camp locates language's sphere of activity not only outside the mind, but beyond the singular speaking subject, or the individual altogether. These different perceptions of the question "Where is language?" are scattered throughout the book's historical narrative.

Joseph focuses on the students' conversation because it discloses the field's distinct conceptual structure: While linguists may appear "fundamentally divided", he writes, in reality they share "a linguistic worldview in which language, or languages, *could be* either in here or out there" (5). What defines modern linguistics, therefore, is less any particular position on the question "Where is language?", than the shared conviction one must choose

sides, as the question itself is a litmus test distinguishing between linguistic camps. This architecture of the scientific field—general agreement upon a critical divide—resonates, for Joseph, with Bruno Latour’s intriguing contribution to actor-network theory, a theoretical pillar of the field of STS (Science, Technology and Society Studies).

In his 1991 essay “We Have Never Been Modern” (Harvard University Press, 1993), Latour theorized the crisis of knowledge of his time as a “proliferation of hybrids.” Most of the events and processes presently relevant to our lives, Latour claimed, involve descriptions entangling science and politics, crude interests and logical arguments, the local and the global, humans and nonhumans—“things” like computers or pacemakers and living creatures like cows or bacteria. These hybrid discourses clash with the Modern Constitution: the modern epistemological norms demanding clean separations between nature and society, humans and nonhumans, subjects and objects of knowledge. While the Modern Constitution demands neat boundaries demarcating unadulterated domains, it also readily engages in mediating and translating between them. Uncompromising purification practices, Latour argues, actually proliferate hybrids—popular and scientific discourses, objects, and themes ill-fitting this regime of partition. “We have never been modern,” Latour reasons, because purification practices inevitably produce emergent networks of hybrids; the Modern Constitution, then, has never lived up to its own definitions.

In his first chapter, Joseph advances “the proposition that body and mind are both hybrid concepts, in Latour’s sense” (46). The chapter opens with a critique of Noam Chomsky’s approach to language and mind which Joseph legitimately understands as the epitome of linguistics’ conceptual blueprint for the past 50 years. “Applying Latour’s framework to the history of linguistics from the seventeenth century to the present”, Joseph

proceeds, “we have little trouble finding other dichotomies besides body–mind that mirror the polarization between Nature and Subject/Society” (15). However, Joseph’s conviction that Latour’s theory may prove helpful for the history of linguistics is not confined to any particular historical period. In fact, he opens his historical presentation with the assumption that the polarization of body and mind “did not begin with the modern period but is already well entrenched in Plato. That is not to say that it even began with him or was exclusive to the Greek tradition” (46). Joseph does not explain how or why Latour’s thesis about modernity should be applicable to an exceptionally *longue durée* history stretching from the pre-Socratics to the twenty-first century.

This attempt to de-historicize Latour’s historically well situated theory generates a series of problems. Applying the Latourian term “hybrid” to premodern periods entails that the bipolar epistemic processes of purification and translation have always existed. This does not correspond to Latour’s argument and risks deflating his concept of hybrid. In fact, the way Joseph uses the term “hybrid” seems to imply that language has always been understood as a phenomenon bridging body and mind. However, as Joseph rightly explains, our concept of mind did not exist in antiquity, and so it is highly questionable that philosophers perceived any need to bridge the concepts of body and mind before modernity consolidated them as pure domains (and set them mischievously crossbreeding). A conceptual history such as the title promises traces conceptual transformations and changing relationships between concepts over time. A genealogical rather than a historical approach, more apposite to reconstructing how the mind/body conceptual divide arose within modern linguistic thought, might have better abetted the book’s stated objectives. The book’s second chapter seems to propose a conceptual analysis of the divergent

interpretations given to the question “Where is language?” which would be interesting to examine more closely in subsequent chapters. Shortcomings notwithstanding, *Language, Mind and Body: A Conceptual History* is a valuable contribution to the history and philosophy of linguistic ideas, passionately demonstrating how stimulating and revealing is the question “Where is language?”

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