

Thinking about touch

Thinking about Touch is an article by Richard Fiest which talks about some interesting phenomenon our sense of touch and its relationship to thoughts and what are the elements that separates them.

Following are some notes that provide a summary of the article along with my personal thoughts on it:

The article refers to the relationship between thoughts and touch. It takes references from the works of famous philosophers like David Hume, Rene Descartes, and Aristotle. It discusses the theory of Hume on how our thoughts are based on the idea, which are based on our experiences throughout life. He refers to these experiences that are a part of our mind's contents, as perception. He categorizes this perception into two parts; ideas and impressions. According to Hume, the perceptions that make a stronger impact on the brain are impressions whereas the ideas are the 'faint images in thinking'. Hume also talks about the relationship between thoughts and touch and how to differentiate between imagining doing something or actually doing something. Here, he mentions the intensity of gaiety that an impression lacks. According to Hume, "Thoughts, in other words, is very much like the trace of touch. Descartes' majorly talks about how the feelings of hunger, pain, thirst, and similar ones are confused modes thinking as a result of combined sensation of all the senses. It is like a union of mind and body but his ideas and theories changed throughout his life. According to Aristotle, human beings possess much more sensitivity to touch as compared to all the other species of animals. Even though we might lack behind them with respect to other senses, the superiority in sense of touch makes us the most intelligent beings.

"While in respect of all the other senses we fall below many species of animals, in respect of touch we far excel all other species in exactness of discrimination. That is why man is the most intelligent of all animals. (Aristotle, 1984, p. 4201a20–23)".

One very interesting idea that the article mentions is that some thinkers have proposed the idea that touch can also occur without contact through perception but it doesn't go into detail in this aspect.

"Some thinkers today have argued that touch might not always include contact since it is possible to perceive something with which we have no contact (Fulkerson, Touch, 2012; Ratcliffe, 2012)".

The article provides information about different perceptions of touch and its relationship with thoughts. The idea of touch in philosophy in the point of views of several philosophers provide insight on how the sense of touch is differently perceived throughout the time. It provides intensive knowledge about how our thoughts and our sense of touch is linked. One very interesting aspect that is discussed in the article is the idea of differentiation between the imagination and the real and how that is differentiated mainly by touch. The study provides some useful insights with respect to touch as an individual sense and regarding different perceptions and ideas revolving around it in the field of philosophy. The author draws a comparison between tactile properties as opposed to visual and auditory properties and how it is easy to sense the visual and auditory properties because there is only one small organ involved and it is easier to distinguish; whereas in haptic experiences, the organ that is functioning is skin and skin covers the whole body.