Question 1. Explain the mind-body problem in detail. Discuss some of the positions held on it in the contemporary philosophy of mind.

 Ans: The mind–body problem is a philosophical problem concerning the relationship between thought and consciousness in the human mind and the brain as part of the physical body. It is distinct from the question of how mind and body function chemically and physiologically since that question presupposes an interactionist account of mind-body relations. This question arises when mind and body are considered as distinct, based on the premise that the mind and the body are fundamentally different in nature.

The problem was addressed by René Descartes in the 17th century, resulting in Cartesian dualism, and by pre-Aristotelian philosophers, in Avicennian philosophy, and in earlier Asian traditions. A variety of approaches have been proposed. Most are either dualist or monist. Dualism maintains a rigid distinction between the realms of mind and matter. Monism maintains that there is only one unifying reality, substance or essence in terms of which everything can be explained.

Each of these categories contains numerous variants. The two main forms of dualism are substance dualism, which holds that the mind is formed of a distinct type of substance not governed by the laws of physics, and property dualism, which holds that mental properties involving conscious experience are fundamental properties, alongside the fundamental properties identified by a completed physics. The three main forms of monism are physicalism, which holds that the mind consists of matter organized in a particular way; idealism, which holds that only thought truly exists and matter is merely an illusion; and neutral monism, which holds that both mind and matter are aspects of a distinct essence that is itself identical to neither of them. Psychophysical parallelism is a third possible alternative regarding the relation between mind and body, between interaction (dualism) and one-sided action (monism).

Several philosophical perspectives have been developed which reject the mind–body dichotomy. The historical materialism of Karl Marx and subsequent writers, itself a form of physicalism, held that consciousness was engendered by the material contingencies of one’s environment. An explicit rejection of the dichotomy is found in French structuralism, and is a position that generally characterized post-war Continental philosophy. The absence of an empirically identifiable meeting point between the non-physical mind (if there is such a thing) and its physical extension (if there is such a thing) has proven problematic to dualism, and many modern philosophers of mind maintain that the mind is not something separate from the body. These approaches have been particularly influential in the sciences, particularly in the fields of sociobiology, computer science, evolutionary psychology, and the neurosciences.

An ancient model of the mind known as the Five-Aggregate Model, described in the Buddhist teachings, explains the mind as continuously changing sense impressions and mental phenomena. Considering this model, it is possible to understand that it is the constantly changing sense impressions and mental phenomena (i.e., the mind) that experiences/analyzes all external phenomena in the world as well as all internal phenomena including the body anatomy, the nervous system as well as the organ brain. This conceptualization leads to two levels of analyses: (i) analyses conducted from a third-person perspective on how the brain works, and (ii) analyzing the moment-to-moment manifestation of an individual’s mind-stream (analyses conducted from a first-person perspective). Considering the latter, the manifestation of the mind-stream is described as happening in every person all the time, even in a scientist who analyses various phenomena in the world, including analyzing and hypothesizing about the organ brain.

Question 2. Is any universal structure necessary in language? Discuss the western perspective on the relation between mind and language.

 Ans: Language is a rule governed system of symbols. And these rules provide regularity and stability in language. But there has been long debate whether these rules are rooted in universal structure of language or contingent system of language developed in a human community. Those who argue for some universal structure of language think that language is embedded in a system of necessary rules and basic structure of language account for the universal grammatical rules. This view is advanced by Freg, Fodor and Chomsky in different ways.

For Frege thought is objective and ahistorical. T thought does not take birth out of psychological process rather in the psychological process one gets related to thought. It has a mind independent existence. For example the Pythagorean Theorem exists independent of our mind; even if nobody knows it remains exist. Thoughts have necessary and space-time transcedent existence. Relations (such as inconsistency, entailment etc.) embedded in thoughts are logical and therefore mind independent. In response to the question: Frege views that though thought is mind independent yet understanding language is necessary for understanding thought. Hence, thought is language dependent but both are not identical. Fodor puts forward his computational theory of mind (CTM) to explain how intentional states of mind get its content (thought). The computational theory of mind can be understood in the background of Representational theory of mind (RTM). According to Representational theory of mind intentional states are relations to mental representation. For example believing – ‘Rahul is courageous’ involves the belief related to mental representation that has meaning – ‘Rahul is courageous’. Fodors computational theory holds that the intentional states are computational relations to mental representations and mental processes. Intentional states involve the manipulation of mental representation. And mental representation has a linguistic structure. That is to mean that thought takes place within mental language what Fodor calls ‘Language of Thought’ (LOTH). He thinks that ‘LOTH’ has syntactical and semantic rules similar to natural language like English. ‘LOTH’ also has finite number of symbols and syntactical rules used for purpose of combining words to form sentences.

Question 3. Why the distinction of strong & weak artificial intelligence (AI) philosophically significant? Discuss reductionism from the perspective of AI.