

The Mind

Our session this month asked some searching questions, and resulted in some differences of opinion – always a healthy premise on which to argue!

Do you believe that your mind and body are two separate entities?

Or do you believe that the physical mind is all there is? Everything your mind decides is a result of physical connections in the brain.

The philosophy of Mind studies the ontology (nature of being), and nature of the mind and its relationship with the body.

Those who believe the physical is the only aspect are called **physicalists**, and those who believe that the mind is an independently existing substance are called **dualists**.

Cogito ergo sum - I think therefore I am. The famous saying of **René Descartes** (1596 – 1650) who argued that the mind is an independently existing substance, identifying him as a dualist.



However, **Baruch Spinoza** (1632 –1677) argued that there is only one substance, which is absolutely infinite, self-caused, and eternal. He called this substance "God", or "Nature".

This led us on to a brief look at the nature of religious belief in the three monotheist religions, and left us with the following questions:

1. In most religious thought the soul is regarded as important. Is the soul what we mean by the mind?
2. For physicalists does the mind cease to exist when the body dies?
3. For dualists who have no religious affiliation, what happens to the mind on death of the body?
4. If AI can (or will be able to) replicate human thought and behaviour, what role will the mind play?

On May 23rd we continue to look at the Mind from a scientist's point of view when Pete Redgrave concludes his analysis of the brain. On June 27th Wallace will present some views on Free Will.

Do come and join our small and attentive group on the **4th Tuesday of the month at 10am at Enterprise House**. We have fun too!