

What is the mind: a dual between the mind and body



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What Is the Mind: A Dual Between the Mind and Body “ I am a thinking thing”. That is the only thing Rene Descartes was certain of, and as of this very moment that I type these words onto this soon to be paper, I agree that it is the only thing I am certain of as well. There are many theories about what the mind really is, but the theory of Mind-Body Dualism stands out from the crowd. I will be going over the theory itself, advantages of this theory, the disadvantages, and further explain my personal thoughts on this topic. Descartes was indeed intrigued by the mechanistic findings in science but that simply wasn't good enough for him in terms of explaining the mind. So in fact; Descartes didn't propose the Mind-Body Dualism Theory first. That person who did was the great philosopher Plato. But what Descartes did do was dive deeper into the theory than Plato ever did. Descartes concluded that we are mind. “ A thinking thing. What is a thinking thing? It is a thing that doubts, understands, affirms, denies, wills, abstains from willing, that also can be aware of images and sensations. ” (Consider Philosophy, 158). To a lesser extent he admits we are body as well; “ I have a body with which I am very closely conjoined, yet since on the one hand I have a clear and distinct idea of myself in so far as I am only a thinking unextended thing, and on the other hand a distinct idea of body, in so far as it is only an extended unthinking thing, it is certain that I am truly distinct from my body, and can exist without it. ” (Consider Philosophy, 158). He says the body is an entirely different substance than the mind. He goes on to say the physical consists of weight, shape, and size which are properties that are not shared with the mind. The brain is a physical substance while the mind is a different substance altogether but they are closely related. One advantage of this theory against other theories is that it coincides with beliefs that people

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already have. For instance; we describe physical sensations with terms like weight, shape, and size but if we were to describe ideas with that terminology it wouldn't make sense. Thus making it easy for people to understand where Descartes is coming from. Another advantage is because it explains in simple terms the connection between the mortal body and the immortal soul or mind. Our body will die but our soul live on. A third advantage explains that human's exclusive capability of free will is something that is unlike that of anything else in the mechanical world. It separates us from everything and that is hard to dispute. A few problems exists in this theory, unfortunately. The idea that because this is a complex theory makes it seem as though it is not a good one because simpler theories are easier to follow. Also, how can things from two different realms be connected so well? I'm talking about the mind and body. It seems to contradict itself as it is hard to imagine where the connection lies when someone comes up with the idea to hit a ball with a bat(idea in the mind) and the action actually occurring(purely physical). My thoughts on this theory are that it explains the mind in the truest fashion compared to the rest, but it doesn't explain everything. I'm a religious person and do believe in God. This theory fails to explain the role God has in the mind. Gottfried Leibniz's Pre-established Harmony theory coupled with this theory, in my opinion, explains what the mind truly is: God's creation of mind connected to a physical human body. Other theories have flaws that I cannot ignore so by default these two theories will have to do until another comes along.