

# The Philosophy of the Mind

Philosophy of the mind is an ancient branch of thought, known to date back to the days of Plato.<sup>1</sup> Since its inauguration, this type of philosophy has been an integral part of human contemplation, leading almost every philosopher over the past several thousand years to record some manner of thought on the subject.<sup>2</sup> This manner of philosophy is an extremely broad topic, housing a great many questions under its roof.<sup>3</sup> This includes the basic question of identity ('Who am I?' and 'How different could I be from what I am now?' for example), of what makes humans 'human',<sup>4</sup> as well as what is often seen as the central issue: what is known as the mind-body problem.<sup>5</sup>

The mind-body problem is the question of what manner of relationship the mind and body share, as well as how the two communicate.<sup>6</sup> The purpose of solving this question would be to determine the nature of our mind, as well as its mental states and processes; it would also solve how or even if the mind is affected by or can effect our body.<sup>7</sup>

To have any hope of solving this question, we must first determine what the body and mind truly are, so that we may establish whether they are one in the same (a monistic view, which we may be found below), or whether they are in fact, different and therefore separate (a dualistic view, which we shall also investigate shortly).<sup>8</sup> First, the body, which we may easily define as that which we are, as perceived with our senses; we are two arms, two legs, a head, and so on.<sup>9</sup> We also have a brain. The brain is generally con-

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<sup>1</sup> University of Waterloo. *Dictionary of Philosophy of Mind*. 11 May 2004. 1 Nov. 2008 <<http://philosophy.uwaterloo.ca/MindDict/>>.

<sup>2</sup> The Gallilean Library. *Introducing Philosophy 14: The Philosophy of the Mind*. 2005. 1 Nov. 2008 <[http://www.iscid.org/encyclopedia/Mind-Body\\_Problem](http://www.iscid.org/encyclopedia/Mind-Body_Problem)>

<sup>3</sup> Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. *Personal Identity*. 20 Aug. 2002. 1 Nov. 2008 <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/identity-personal/>>. Also Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. *Philosophy of Mind*. 27 Oct. 2008. 1 Nov. 2008 <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy\\_of\\_mind](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy_of_mind)>

<sup>4</sup> Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. *Personal Identity*. 20 Aug. 2002. 1 Nov. 2008 <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/identity-personal/>>

<sup>5</sup> Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. *Philosophy of Mind*. 27 Oct. 2008. 1 Nov. 2008 <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy\\_of\\_mind](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy_of_mind)>

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> The Gallilean Library. *Introducing Philosophy 14: The Philosophy of the Mind*. 2005. 1 Nov. 2008 <[http://www.iscid.org/encyclopedia/Mind-Body\\_Problem](http://www.iscid.org/encyclopedia/Mind-Body_Problem)>. Also University of Waterloo. *Dictionary of Philosophy of Mind*. 11 May 2004. 1 Nov. 2008 <<http://philosophy.uwaterloo.ca/MindDict/>>.

<sup>9</sup> Duniho, Fergus. *The Mind/Body Problem and Its Solution*. Apr. 1991. 1 Nov. 2008 <<http://www.ling.rochester.edu/~duniho/MS-Thesis/Contents.html>>.

sidered as the place where our consciousness and intellect are supposed to reside<sup>10</sup>, as well as being the place where all of our daily bodily functions are regulated.<sup>11</sup> This would explain, for example, how a blow to the head would render us unconscious, or how an irregularity in brain growth may cause certain problems with the running of the body. However, scientists have not yet found any concrete evidence that the personality may be mapped out simply by observing the brain, which brings us to the concept of the mind.<sup>12</sup> The brain may be considered as a part of the body, while the mind is more concerned with our ability to be aware of the world, whether real or imagined, and to have beliefs about that world.<sup>13</sup> Likewise, our feelings, hopes and desires all require the existence of beliefs, so these may all be traced to this illustrious 'mind'.<sup>14</sup>

This leads us back to the mind-body problem: what exactly is our mind?<sup>15</sup> Is it a part of the body, or something entirely separate from our material selves?<sup>16</sup> These two views are called Monism and Dualism, respectively.<sup>17</sup> Let us look at each of these views in turn.

The first view is Monism, which claims that mind and matter are essentially the same.<sup>18</sup> So a monist believes that the mind is just one aspect of the being, therefore being located in, or being very similar to the human brain.<sup>19</sup> Within Monism as a whole there are many sub-categories; just as within the Metaphysics of the Mind, there are many smaller questions. The two most basic of these ideas are known as Materialism and Idealism.<sup>20</sup> Materialism claims that the mind must be made of matter, for all things

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<sup>10</sup> The Gallilean Library. Introducing Philosophy 14: The Philosophy of the Mind. 2005. 1 Nov. 2008 <[http://www.iscid.org/encyclopedia/Mind-Body\\_Problem](http://www.iscid.org/encyclopedia/Mind-Body_Problem)>

<sup>11</sup> Clark, Andy. I Am John's Brain. 1995. 1 Nov. 2008 <<http://imprint.co.uk/online/Clark.html>>.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> The Gallilean Library. Introducing Philosophy 14: The Philosophy of the Mind. 2005. 1 Nov. 2008 <[http://www.iscid.org/encyclopedia/Mind-Body\\_Problem](http://www.iscid.org/encyclopedia/Mind-Body_Problem)>. Also University of Waterloo. Dictionary of Philosophy of Mind. 11 May 2004. 1 Nov. 2008 <<http://philosophy.uwaterloo.ca/MindDict/>>. Also Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. Philosophy of Mind. 27 Oct. 2008. 1 Nov. 2008 <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy\\_of\\_mind](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy_of_mind)>.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> University of Waterloo. Dictionary of Philosophy of Mind. 28 Sep. 2005. 1 Nov. 2008 <<http://philosophy.uwaterloo.ca/MindDict/monism.html>>.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Duniho, Fergus. The Mind/Body Problem and Its Solution. Apr. 1991. 1 Nov. 2008 <<http://www.ling.rochester.edu/~duniho/MS-Thesis/Contents.html>>.

which exist must be made of matter; therefore, since the mind exists, it is made of matter.<sup>21</sup> Idealists hold the perfectly opposing view; the claim of idealists being that the mind is all that exists, so the external world is either mental in itself, or created by our mind; therefore, the mind and all else is purely mental.<sup>22</sup> All other monistic points of view lie between these two extremes.<sup>23</sup>

Within Monism, there are also Physicalists, who believe that only entities proven by physical theory (which uses the employ of mathematical models in order explain data taken from the natural world<sup>24</sup>) exist, and that the mind will eventually be explained as physical theory continues to evolve.<sup>25</sup> This form of monism is noted as the most followed in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries; unsurprising, given the mathematical base our world has acquired in that time.<sup>26</sup> Next is Epiphenomenalism, originally proposed by Thomas Hobbes, which brought forwards the belief that mental phenomena are not causal, that is they are caused by, but do not themselves cause any sort of physical phenomena, but merely have that appearance.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, by his definition, the physical world is the only true substance, as in Materialism.<sup>28</sup> There is also Property Dualism (also known as the Dual-Aspect Theory), brought forwards by Baruch Spinoza, in which the mental and the physical were both seen as two types of a more basic substance, which he called God.<sup>29</sup> (Since there is really only one substance at the heart of his theory, it is still regarded as monism, even though it has Dualism in the name.<sup>30</sup>) This made his idea of the only real property in the world neither physical nor mental.<sup>31</sup> Lastly, there

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<sup>21</sup> Duniho, Fergus. *The Mind/Body Problem and Its Solution*. Apr. 1991. 1 Nov. 2008 <<http://www.ling.rochester.edu/~duniho/MS-Thesis/Contents.html>>. Also University of Waterloo. *Dictionary of Philosophy of Mind*. 11 May 2004. 1 Nov. 2008 <<http://philosophy.uwaterloo.ca/MindDict/materialism.html>>.

<sup>22</sup> Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. *Philosophy of Mind*. 27 Oct. 2008. 1 Nov. 2008 <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy\\_of\\_mind](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy_of_mind)>

<sup>23</sup> Duniho, Fergus. *The Mind/Body Problem and Its Solution*. Apr. 1991. 1 Nov. 2008 <<http://www.ling.rochester.edu/~duniho/MS-Thesis/Contents.html>>

<sup>24</sup> Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. *Physical Theory*. 27 Oct. 2008. 5 Nov. 2008 <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Physical\\_theory](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Physical_theory)>

<sup>25</sup> Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. *Philosophy of Mind*. 27 Oct. 2008. 1 Nov. 2008 <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy\\_of\\_mind](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy_of_mind)>

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> University of Waterloo. *Dictionary of Philosophy of Mind*. 28 Sep. 2005. 1 Nov. 2008 <<http://philosophy.uwaterloo.ca/MindDict/monism.html>>

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

are Neutral Monists, who also believed that there is some, as of yet undiscovered neutral substance, and that both matter and the mind are properties of it.<sup>32</sup> However, neutral monists did not take part in Spinoza's theory of this unknown substance being some manner of supreme being.<sup>33</sup>

The prospects of Property Dualism and Neutral Monism brings forward another interesting prospect: that of the Philosophy of Pre-Established Harmony, created by Gottfried Leibniz, who is regarded as neither a Dualist or a Monist.<sup>34</sup> His thesis was that there is no mind-body interaction at all, only a non-causal relationship of harmony and correspondence; that is, that neither the mind nor the body cause anything to happen with the other, but do communicate.<sup>35</sup> Leibniz did believe that the mental and the physical were two distinct realms, however he did not think that the universe needed to be divided into two separate kinds of substance, one which thought, and one which did not.<sup>36</sup> His view was that the world consists of only one type of substance, but that there are infinitely more substances of that type, being partless entities, some of which were endowed with thought, and some of which were not.<sup>37</sup> He believed that the mind and body could not exert any causal influence on each other because he also thought that the interaction between two separate things required the transmission of parts that made up those beings; and since the substances he had proposed were simple entities which contained no parts, there was no way to explain how one substance could thereby influence the other.<sup>38</sup> He does allow, however, for God's causal influences on these simple substances.<sup>39</sup>

Let us now look at Dualism, the complete opposite to Monism in that Dualists in general believe that the mind and body are two separate entities, either wholly or at least significantly, and that the mind was in no way equivalent to the brain.<sup>40</sup> Within this

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<sup>32</sup> Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. Philosophy of Mind. 27 Oct. 2008. 1 Nov. 2008 <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy\\_of\\_mind](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy_of_mind)>

<sup>33</sup> University of Waterloo. Dictionary of Philosophy of Mind. 28 Sep. 2005. 1 Nov. 2008 <<http://philosophy.uwaterloo.ca/MindDict/monism.html>>

<sup>34</sup> Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Leibniz's Philosophy of the Mind. 9 Oct. 2007. 4 Nov. 2008 <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/leibniz-mind/>>.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> The Gallilean Library. Introducing Philosophy 14: The Philosophy of the Mind. 2005. 1 Nov. 2008 <[http://www.iscid.org/encyclopedia/Mind-Body\\_Problem](http://www.iscid.org/encyclopedia/Mind-Body_Problem)>. Also University of Waterloo. Dictionary of Philosophy of Mind. 11 May 2004. 1 Nov. 2008 <<http://philosophy.uwaterloo.ca/MindDict/>>. Also Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. Philosophy of Mind. 27 Oct. 2008. 1 Nov. 2008 <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy\\_of\\_mind](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy_of_mind)>.

view, there are two basic sub-sections, known as Substance Dualists, and Property Dualists, the former believing that the mind is an independently existing substance, simply, and the latter that the mind is a group of independent properties which are not a distinct substance.<sup>41</sup>

Of the many types of Dualism, the most heavily referenced is that of the philosopher René Descartes.<sup>42</sup> His view is known as Cartesian Dualism, within which he outlined his belief that two substances, mind and matter, made up everything, could causally interact, and that each substance had a separate defining attribute.<sup>43</sup> The defining attribute of the mind, he decided, is thought, and the defining attribute of matter is spatial extension (that is, having spatial dimensions, and the ability to be located<sup>44</sup>).<sup>45</sup> His solution to the mind-body problem is that mental representation, while caused by the physical, does not approximate to the physical.<sup>46</sup> According to Descartes, these two substances could have nothing in common; if they did, they would not be fundamentally different things.<sup>47</sup> Also, in being such different things, he proposed that both the mind and the matter could exist independently of each other.<sup>48</sup> This, however, gave birth to the Problem of Interaction, which questioned how, if the mind and body were proposed to be so different, could the mind and body possibly interact?<sup>49</sup> His explanation also left out how the mental comes to represent the physical at all, leaving one to assume that God must be responsible for the interaction.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. Philosophy of Mind. 27 Oct. 2008. 1 Nov. 2008 <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy\\_of\\_mind](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy_of_mind)>

<sup>42</sup> International Society for Complexity, Information, and Design. Mind-Body Problem. 2008. 1 Nov. 2008 <[http://www.iscid.org/encyclopedia/Mind-Body\\_Problem](http://www.iscid.org/encyclopedia/Mind-Body_Problem)>. Also University of Waterloo. Dictionary of Philosophy of Mind. 27 Feb. 2006. 1 Nov. 2008 <<http://philosophy.uwaterloo.ca/MindDict/dualism.html>>

<sup>43</sup> International Society for Complexity, Information, and Design. Mind-Body Problem. 2008. 1 Nov. 2008 <[http://www.iscid.org/encyclopedia/Mind-Body\\_Problem](http://www.iscid.org/encyclopedia/Mind-Body_Problem)>

<sup>44</sup> University of Waterloo. Dictionary of Philosophy of Mind. 27 Feb. 2006. 1 Nov. 2008 <<http://philosophy.uwaterloo.ca/MindDict/dualism.html>>

<sup>45</sup> International Society for Complexity, Information, and Design. Mind-Body Problem. 2008. 1 Nov. 2008 <[http://www.iscid.org/encyclopedia/Mind-Body\\_Problem](http://www.iscid.org/encyclopedia/Mind-Body_Problem)>

<sup>46</sup> University of Waterloo. Dictionary of Philosophy of Mind. 27 Feb. 2006. 1 Nov. 2008 <<http://philosophy.uwaterloo.ca/MindDict/dualism.html>>

<sup>47</sup> International Society for Complexity, Information, and Design. Mind-Body Problem. 2008. 1 Nov. 2008 <[http://www.iscid.org/encyclopedia/Mind-Body\\_Problem](http://www.iscid.org/encyclopedia/Mind-Body_Problem)>

<sup>48</sup> University of Waterloo. Dictionary of Philosophy of Mind. 27 Feb. 2006. 1 Nov. 2008 <<http://philosophy.uwaterloo.ca/MindDict/dualism.html>>

<sup>49</sup> International Society for Complexity, Information, and Design. Mind-Body Problem. 2008. 1 Nov. 2008 <[http://www.iscid.org/encyclopedia/Mind-Body\\_Problem](http://www.iscid.org/encyclopedia/Mind-Body_Problem)>

<sup>50</sup> University of Waterloo. Dictionary of Philosophy of Mind. 27 Feb. 2006. 1 Nov. 2008 <<http://philosophy.uwaterloo.ca/MindDict/dualism.html>>

Another form of Dualism is Occasionalism, as proposed by Johannes Clauberg, in which he stated that everything is devoid of causal interaction at all, that the only true causal agent is God.<sup>51</sup> By his definition, if one was to place their hand on a hot stove, the stove itself would not be the causal agent of pain; rather the placing of the hand would be an occasion for God to cause the mental state of pain.<sup>52</sup>

Today, Dualism is generally discredited, not only for the fact that explaining how non-physical phenomena can effect a physical world seems to be impossible<sup>53</sup>, but also because modern technology has made it increasingly difficult to draw some manner of line between the identity of brain states and the mind.<sup>54</sup>

The many answers to the Mind-Body problem each have their own substantial enigmas within, as we have seen, and this has led to questioning of the Mind-Body problem in general.<sup>55</sup> It has been argued that the reason none of the answers have come to fruition is because there is an underlying sense of conceptual confusion.<sup>56</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, and philosophers like him, draw forward the lance of linguistic criticism, and reject the problem as being illusory.<sup>57</sup> Their argument is that it is an error to ask in the first place how the mental and biological states fit together at all, and that it should be accepted instead that human existence can be described in mental, or in biological vocabulary.<sup>58</sup> Their insistence is that, if one is described in terms of the other's context, or attempted to be used in the incorrect context, then there is a fallacy of reasoning, and these illusory problems arise.<sup>59</sup>

After many thousands of years in which Philosophers have pondered the same problem, many seem to be willing to simply accept that the mind is a natural phenomenon as a solution of sorts to the ever-present Mind-Body Problem.<sup>60</sup> Given those years spent, and given that the advancement of our society has only seemed to make the prob-

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Jackson, Frank., and Ray Georges. *Mind, Philosophy Of*. 1998. 4 Nov. 2008 <<http://www.rep.routledge.com/article/V038>>.

<sup>54</sup> International Society for Complexity, Information, and Design. *Mind-Body Problem*. 2008. 1 Nov. 2008 <[http://www.iscid.org/encyclopedia/Mind-Body\\_Problem](http://www.iscid.org/encyclopedia/Mind-Body_Problem)>.

<sup>55</sup> Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. *Philosophy of Mind*. 27 Oct. 2008. 1 Nov. 2008 <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy\\_of\\_mind](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy_of_mind)>

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Jackson, Frank., and Ray Georges. *Mind, Philosophy Of*. 1998. 4 Nov. 2008 <<http://www.rep.routledge.com/article/V038>>.

lem itself more complicated,<sup>61</sup> it seems doubtful that, even in this age of enlightenment and wisdom of the world in which we live, we will ever find a definitive and unanimous answer to the question of whether the mind and body are one.

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<sup>61</sup> International Society for Complexity, Information, and Design. Mind-Body Problem. 2008. 1 Nov. 2008 <[http://www.iscid.org/encyclopedia/Mind-Body\\_Problem](http://www.iscid.org/encyclopedia/Mind-Body_Problem)>.