

Free Will Study Day report – 17th Nov 2016

This was held at the Bay Hub a brand new centre with state of the art facilities.

After registration, the first speaker Jonathan M.S. Pearce talked about the topic of free will, do we have it from a philosophical point of view. This was a most stimulating talk with comments and questions from the floor ! At the end of the talk we realised how our apparently free decisions are largely a product of our backgrounds going right back to the big bang- the causality idea.

The second speaker was Dr Lorenzo Stafford from the department of psychology at the University of Portsmouth. He introduced us to the idea of priming. This involved exposing people to an almost subliminal stimulus and comparing their responses before and after. A relevant example for this day was that at a meeting of seniors, mention was made several times of ageing and the physical effects, with the result that a lot more of them shuffled out, compared to a group where there were no comment re ageing. Obviously this has a bearing on political campaigns, media of all types and the decisions we make.

For the next session, some Yr 9 students from Bay House School joined us for discussion groups. There were four groups and they were led by the speakers, and the Reverend Sean Blackman. Each group talked about Free Will in the context of philosophy, psychology, science /maths, and spirituality. Everyone had a lot to say, and each group fed back to the others at the end. The students stayed for lunch, and it was good to see them interacting with the other attendees. They had a very positive input to the day.

After lunch we had the final talk by Professor Andrew Osbaldsten Head of Applied Mathematics at the University of Portsmouth, on chaos theory, and whether it is possible to predict the future in any way. It seems that this cannot happen because it is not possible to accurately state the placing of anything to start with.

Where did all this leave us with regard to Free Will ? Pretty much where we started.....we don't really know.....

Some of the feedback comments

Interesting having input from the youngsters

Very inspirational. Interesting and stimulating can we do this again?

Brilliant More days please ! I predict more people will attend, indeed I am determined they will

A really worthwhile day. Good speakers. Opportunity to interact on the subject and plenty of food for thought.

Excellent. Shook up the grey cells. Well organised and planned Well done Sally let's have more Fascinating lectures. Interesting conversations in break times. Student from Bay House were delightful, intellectually bright and enhanced the discussion groups

Excellent a very good mix of subjects. Very interesting when is the next one ?

Thoroughly enjoyable very interesting. Well run.

Could we have more days please ! Thankyou

We certainly benefitted from having the Bay House students join us for the breakout groups