

Subject for discussion 20th June 2013: -

"It is certain that I (that is, my mind, by which I am what I am) is entirely and truly distinct from my body, and may exist without it". Rene Descartes

Group member Leon Freris had previously distributed an article of his entitled "A layman's view of problems with evolution theory". This had been published in Communicative and Integrated Biology. At the start of the meeting Leon explained his ideas in a simpler form.

The following are thoughts expressed by Leon and the group.

Consciousness just appeared out of nowhere.

Can mental states ever be physical states? How?

Is the mind the brain?

In the beginning we all had an intimate knowledge of our conscious experience, but scientific reductionists say that this is an illusion.

It is certain that we are made out of matter.

Matter and experience are qualitatively different.

If the mind is detached from matter, does it continue after death?

Damage to the mind affects mental function.

Scientists can use reductionist principles on Biology by studying the smallest, simplest particles to discover how larger, more complex organisms work.

Many scientists believe that the only alternative to theism is a scientific explanation. There could be a way between the two.

How can the experiential be physical?

There are steps from the beginnings of life to conscious humans.

What does the scientist define as consciousness?

Scientist asked the differences between the conscious and the sub conscious drew a circle in the middle of a sheet of paper. This circle represented consciousness and the whole surrounding area the subconscious.

So much is known about physical evolution, but we are still groping in the dark about mental evolution.

We cannot take the mind or memory apart and examine it that is where philosophers come in.

We can see activity at molecular level in the brain, but what has this to do with seeing the colour red?

We cannot assume that what we each see is the same.

We may express preferences for various shades of red, or dislike for the colour.

What goes on in the brain is a miracle and a mystery.

Things are not in specific places in the brain. There is not a special part for falling in love.

The brain is more like a hologram. You can break of a piece and it still shows the whole picture, though the quality is affected.

Reductionists say that there was an event such as a lightning bolt or volcanic activity that caused an accidental arrangement of particles that became the first organism to be able to reproduce itself.

There is a code needed for reproduction. When there were errors in this code, the better errors survived and the reproduced more effectively.

This is the case behind Darwinian evolution.

Experiential functions began to appear such as the ability to detect a dangerous environment.

Digestion and excretion all developed through evolution.

These gradual developments from primitive organisms through to self-aware, conscious humans from the chance event are presented as fact, because scientists say so.

The difference between science and religion is that a scientist says "This is my theory. I will devote my life to proving it" Religion says "This is what you must believe, or you will be punished".

Creationists are misguided.

Many scientists become religious.

We live in a secular culture and are brow beaten to believe that anything else is not scientific.

From childhood we find it difficult to believe that there was a time that we did not exist, or that we will not exist once we die.

To be dead is to be forgotten. We cannot be dead if we are not forgotten.

We have an internal dialogue. Who is talking to whom? Where are they?

Before religions talked to each other, almost all had a belief in life after death.

This is wishful thinking.

Where did the idea come from?

Desire that one's ego will not be destroyed.

Religion profits from the afterlife.

The afterlife is not always a reassurance, especially to the depressed.

Now we have brain, mind, soul and spirit.

Some people have experiences of déjà vu.

These experiences are like dreams, difficult to hold on to.

A form of epilepsy gives that déjà vu feeling.

Do we know that we haven't been recycled?

There is a law of conservation of matter

How would we account for the increase in population numbers?

Where were we before?

Could there be beings more advanced than us?

Was it random chance or design?

Design by whom?

More interesting is - Why?

Thought comes from the brain

The brain controls the process of imparting the thought to another

If matter is dead, you cannot create something conscious from it

When matter comes together in certain ways, mind like activity comes from it

If experience is to emerge, matter must be experiential in nature

Matter has some sort of psychic quality

Edison found evidence of Einstein's theory of relativity

Scientists read pointers on instruments and have nothing to say on the intrinsic qualities of the atom

At a very basic level there is mind quality

Quantum mechanics shows entanglement of sub atomic particles demonstrates consciousness

Germs learn to adapt to antibiotics

Evolutionary adaptations explain germs

Philosophers say scientists are misleading in saying matter is dead

In science fiction the brain can continue separate from the body

Have aliens taken over our bodies

We will be recycled; everything goes back to basics, dust to dust...

We could be reincarnated as a cockroach

We are reproduced in our children, so carry on in their genes

What will happen if we are able to transplant brains?

Those with other transplants take on some of the donors abilities

It may be possible for a computer to think like a human, have mind like qualities and a will of its own

The computer will adopt the personality of the programmer

The language of computer programming has changed and is more conversational

Self-replicating systems can have experiences, machines cannot.

Asimov wrote "I Robot" in the 50s
We too are programmed with the way we think
Have we always had the same emotions, or have they evolved?
Is love of greenery and water more than our need for survival?
If we are preprogrammed we cannot have our own ideas
Our opinions are subjective
We all run programmes or patterns. We observe others, learn and improve

At the end of the meeting we were all invited to give our final thoughts. Due to the length of the above notes, I will not detail these. Some of us were more confused than at the beginning, but most of us had found some of the ideas exchanged helpful.

Inevitably we have not yet succeeded in resolving the mind body problem.