

MIND AND LIFE

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Abstract

Famously, Aristotle's "soul" (the standard English translation of *ψυχή*) is associated with life, that is, for the distinction between the animate and the inanimate, and also with mind, that is, everything that is mental, including not only perceptions but also thought. Throughout a large part of his work one gets the impression that the mind can be understood in biological terms, but in some places he makes it clear that the mental faculties (or powers) are different from the rest: they are, in some sense, not part of the body. The arguments for this are not clear. During the millennia since then philosophers have addressed the "mind-body" problem, asking whether the mental is physical; and often the beginning of contemporary thought on this matter is ascribed to Descartes' argument, advocating mind-body dualism. Contemporary philosophy as well as science present us with several novel ideas and significant data, that take the investigation of this matter a few steps ahead. However, even in contemporary thought, the connection between life and the mind remains controversial and problematic. In this talk I will present some of the prevalent philosophical and scientific views concerning the question, whether the mental must be associated with life, or whether the mental can also exist in inanimate objects. I will show that the connection between life and mind is still unclear even in contemporary philosophy and science. It will then be interested to discuss, whether some of these ideas have parallel intuitions in Aristotle's thought, despite the conceptual differences between the general metaphysical frameworks.