

PHLB81 – Theories of Mind

First Essay Topics

Select one of the following topics to write your first essay on. Please remember to keep your essay between 1600-1800 words (no more, no less). A philosophy essay is concerned with presenting and analyzing arguments using reason. You do not have to pick a side. If you choose to defend one side of the argument, it does not matter which side of the argument you pick. What matters is the quality of your analysis of the arguments and the quality of the new arguments you advance. I do not advise looking at secondary sources for such a short paper but if you are stuck secondary material can help generate ideas. Always remember to cite your sources (even if they all come from the Kim book); you can use any citation system you like.

1. *Cartesian Dualism*. The most famous mind-body theory is that of René Descartes. Carefully describe his theory and consider the arguments both for and against it. What is your own view of how successful Descartes's theory (or one like it) is?
2. *The Call of Behaviourism*. An early 20th century response to dualism was behaviourism, which appeared in various forms. Consider the nature of this theory. Why do you think it was so popular and successful? Could it provide the basis of a good theory of the mind-body relation?
3. *Mind=Brain*. The most basic pure materialist theory is the psycho-neural identity theory. Carefully describe the nature of this theory and its motivations. Discuss the arguments for and against it. Is it the solution to the mind-body problem, a stepping stone to the solution, or a dead-end?