

# Intentionality Contra Physicalism: On the Mind's Independence from the Body

*Forthcoming, Philosophia Christi 20 (2) (2018)*

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**ABSTRACT:** We argue for the mind's independence from the body. We do so by making several moves. First, we analyze two popular kinds of reasons which have swayed many to adopt the independence of the mind from the body. Second, we advance an argument from the ontology of intentionality against the identity thesis, according to which the mind is identical to the brain. We try to show how intentionality is not reducible to or identical to the physical. Lastly, we argue that, contrary to what many materialists contend, the concept of a mind, understood as an immaterial substance, existing independently of the body is both coherent and empirically evidenced.

## *Introduction*<sup>1</sup>

Many persons today who regard themselves as scientifically minded—and who today does not—hold that only ignorance or nuttiness could explain anyone's believing that the mind is independent of the body (mind-body dualism). David Braddon-Mitchel and Frank Jackson, for example, describe dualism as, “akin to explaining lightning in terms of Thor's anger, and hence is fundamentally primitive and pre-scientific.”<sup>2</sup> Patricia

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<sup>1</sup> This paper has an unusual genesis. In the fall of 2011, while a graduate student at Biola University, arrangements were made so, I (Brandon) could study with Dallas Willard at USC. I was interested in learning from Dallas about knowledge by acquaintance, intentionality, and phenomenology. Dallas passed two years later. In the summer of 2018, I visited the Dallas Willard library collection at Westmont College. There I found, among other things, a handwritten lecture by Dallas. I suggested to Dallas's daughter, Becky Willard-Heatley, that I transcribe Dallas's lecture notes, so they could be shared online. In the process of doing this, I realized the notes were complete enough that I could turn them into a publishable paper. I edited, revised, and expand the original arguments and research so as to further Dallas's academic work and apply some of what I learned from Dallas. The result is this paper. I am incredibly grateful that the Willard family supported my efforts to bring this work to fruition. I would also like to thank Diane Ziliotto, who oversees the Dallas Willard Collection, for her help in finding the original lecture notes.

<sup>2</sup> David Braddon-Mitchel and Frank Jackson, *Philosophy of Mind and Cognition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 8.

Churchland calls mind-body dualism, “an outdated theoretical curiosity”.<sup>3</sup> Marcelo Sabatés compares belief in the immaterial mind to belief in elves and chupacabras.<sup>4</sup> Steven Horst offers a less sensationalized appraisal.

...a casual observer of recent philosophy of mind would likely come to the conclusion that, amidst all of the disagreements between specialists in this field, there is at least one thing that stands as more or less a consensus view: the commitment to a naturalistic philosophy of mind.<sup>5</sup>

Certainly, there are interesting reason for rejecting mind-body independence. But they are not conclusive reasons, by any means. Instead of dwelling upon them now, we wish to point out that to the contrary, most human beings,<sup>6</sup> and most of the great philosophers,<sup>7</sup> have believed that the mind was, to some significant degree, independent of the body.

In this paper, we wish to point out the sorts of reasons which provide philosophical grounds for the many persons who have accepted mind-body

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<sup>3</sup> Patricia Churchland, *Brain Wise: Studies in Neurophilosophy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 173.

<sup>4</sup> Marcelo H. Sabatés, “Reductionism in the Philosophy of Mind,” *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2005. Retrieved May 10, 2017. <<http://www.encyclopedia.com/humanities/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/reductionism-philosophy-mind>>.

<sup>5</sup> Steven Horst, “Naturalism in the Philosophy of Mind” *Philosophy Compass* 4 (1) (2009), 219.

<sup>6</sup> A number of studies in the cognitive sciences conclude that belief in mind-body independence is ubiquitous across both human history and socioeconomic divides and naturally present in early stages of human development. See, for example, Paul Bloom, *Descartes’s Baby: How the Science of Child Development Explains What Makes Us Human* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2004); P. Rochat and T. Striano, “Social-Cognitive Development in the First Year,” in *Early Social Cognition: Understanding Others in the First Year of Life*, edited by P. Rochat, pp. 3-34 (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1999); V. A. Kuhlmeier, P. Bloom, and K. Wynn, “Do 5-month-old Infants See Humans as Material Objects?” *Cognition* 94 (1) (2004): 95–103; Henry M. Wellman and A.K. Hickling, “The Minds “I”: Children’s Conception of the Mind as an Active Agent,” *Child Development* 65 (1994): 1564–80. For a philosophical analysis of the naturalness of belief in mind-body independence, see, Uwe Meixner, “The Naturalness of Dualism,” in *After Physicalism*, edited by Benedickt Paul Göcke (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012), 25-47.

<sup>7</sup> Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Descartes, Locke, Butler, Reid, and Kant, to name only a few, where all mind-body dualists of one kind or another.

independence.<sup>8</sup> In section 2 we consider whether or not there are any recent advances in knowledge which successfully undercut these reasons for mind-body independence. In doing so, we advance an argument in favor of mind-body independence from the ontological nature of intentionality.<sup>9</sup> We argue for at least the claim that facts about intentionality can be described entirely with no need to incorporate facts about physical things. Our argument in this section explains why intentionality cannot be naturalized, cannot be reduced to or identical to the physical. Of course, this may not directly prove that any human mind *is, in fact*, independent of a corresponding body, that some disembodied mind or minds actually do exist. In section 3 we argue for the claim that the human mind is independent of any body by reflecting on phenomenological and evidential considerations. Our main thesis, however, is that that the ontological nature of intentionality is compelling evidence against physicalism.

### ***1. Consciousness and the Nature of Intentionality***

What, then, are the considerations which have led the majority of persons, including philosophers, to hold that the mind has a significant degree of independence from the body? To introduce these considerations, we must first call attention to a wide range of facts to which every human being has access.<sup>10</sup> The range of facts which we have in mind includes, as typical members, the following: my *seeing* you and my believing that you are awake. My *hoping* to convince you of the possibility that mind is independent of the body. My *awareness* of my leg gone to sleep. Your *hearing* my

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<sup>8</sup> Of course, most people hold to independence without these arguments. See footnote 6 for works on how most people naturally form belief in mind-body independence (substance dualism) without argument, but often by experience of one's self.

<sup>9</sup> For an alternative criticism of naturalism from the ontology of intentionality, see, John J. Haldane, "Naturalism and the Problem of Intentionality," *Inquiry* 32 (3) (1989): 305-22.

<sup>10</sup> Because of the phenomenological nature of our arguments, it is essential that we retain the first-person perspective. Hence, when significant, we shift from referring to ourselves as co-authors to the first-person perspective. As with all phenomenological argument we invite the reader to consider their experience of consciousness from their own first-person perspective in these first-person reflections.

words. Your *understanding* of what I say (or your *not* understanding it). My sudden *realization* that one of my utterances was not actually correct. My *anxiety* over pollution. My *decision* to have breakfast in the cafeteria at work. My *remembering* to get some gas for my car. Your *feeling* pride in an accomplishment. Your *behaving courageously* or *wisely*. Your being *depressed*. Your *love* of music or dancing, etc.

You have before you a wide range of facts which we might agree to denominate the range of *experiences* (states of consciousness) or dispositions to have certain experiences. It is, indeed, the range of facts with which every person is most familiar, and about which she is in a position to correctly report unending details.<sup>11</sup> If we were inclined to seek for any general characterization of the range of facts in question, the most successful proposal would probably turn out to be the character of *intentionality*. Each experience we have—with only a few questionable cases—has intentionality as each is *of* or *about* something other than itself.<sup>12</sup> My *awareness* of my leg gone to sleep, for example, is an experience or state of consciousness that is *of* or *about* my leg.<sup>13</sup>

## 1.1 Some Background on the Phenomenological Concept of *Intentionality*

A phenomenological concept of intentionality ties together subjective mental states or acts with objective (that is, mind-independent) objects and facts.

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<sup>11</sup> For the purposes of our argument, we needn't assume the Cartesian thesis that introspection gives us incorrigible beliefs. That may be true. However, all we need is that introspection gives us defeasible knowledge about our conscious states. This is the kind of knowledge that neuroscientists make use of in various experiments which rely on first-person reports.

<sup>12</sup> For a defense of intentionalism (the thesis that all mental states have intentionality), see Tim Crane, "The Intentional Structure of Consciousness," in Quentin Smith and Aleksandar Jokic (eds.), *Consciousness: New Philosophical Perspectives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 33-56.

<sup>13</sup> Another crucial factor many philosophers would identify as a characteristic of this range of facts would be phenomenal consciousness, that each has a "what it's like" sense to be in that mental state. We have chosen to set this aside and focus on intentionality. However, those attracted to *phenomenal intentionality* the thesis that intentionality that is constituted by phenomenal consciousness, may find that our argument extends to phenomenal consciousness as well.

Phenomenological accounts of intentionality look for, as Tim Crane notes, “a sense in which something is “given” to the mind in sensation and emotion, just as something is given to the mind in thought and experience...in sensation something is felt, in emotion, something is apprehended...”<sup>14</sup> Hence, intentionality is prioritized as a phenomenological notion. The immediate antecedents of the phenomenological concept of intentionality are in the thought Franz Brentano:

Every mental phenomenon is characterized by what the Scholastics of the Middle Ages called the intentional (or mental) inexistence [*inexistenz*] of an object [*Gegenstand*], and what we might call, though not wholly unambiguously, reference to a content, direction toward an object (which is not to be understood here as meaning a thing), or immanent objectivity. Every mental phenomenon includes something as an object within itself,<sup>15</sup> although they do not all do so in the same way. In presentation something is presented, in judgement something is affirmed or denied, in love loved, in hate hated, in desire desired and so on.

This intentional in-existence is characteristic exclusively of mental phenomena. No physical phenomenon exhibits anything like it. We can, therefore, define mental phenomena by saying that they are those phenomena which contain an object intentionally within themselves.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Tim Crane, “Intentionality as the Mark of the Mental,” in Anthony O’Hear (ed.), *Contemporary Issues in the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 243.

<sup>15</sup> This talk of “immanence” and “inclusion” in consciousness is very dangerous, leading to what Sartre calls “the illusion of immanence”. See, Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Psychology of Imagination* (London: Routledge, 2000. First published in French in 1940), Ch. 2; and Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (New York, NY: Washington Square Press, 1992. First published in French in 1943), 187.

<sup>16</sup> Franz Brentano, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* (London: Routledge, 2015. First printing in 1874), Bk. 2.1, 92-93.

The Latin source of “intentionality” is “*intentio*”, which refers to *a stretching out, or an extending*, toward something. *Intentio* is, in the Aristotelian terminology, the actuality or act of thought, the actual stretching out of the mind toward its objects as it sees, imagines, remembers, infers, believes, and knows. Intentionality, understood in this Husserlian sense, is not a simple beam that falls on various objections like a flashlight. The word “act” is thus often used in the literature of philosophy as equivalent with “intention” (*intentio*). But it always refers, in this use to an actuality, an actual determination of the mind, not to a mental *activity* or *change* of mental states, a mental *doing*.<sup>17</sup> To “act”, to “intend” in this sense, is merely to instance a *referential quality*.<sup>18</sup> The following passage from Thomas Aquinas and from Aristotle, respectively, may help to clear up this point, and also give some of its history. Consider, first, the following line of thought from Thomas.

...There are two kinds of action, as is said in the 9<sup>th</sup> book of *Metaphysics*. One passes over into something external, bringing passion to it; for instance, the actions of burning and sawing. The second kind of action does not pass over into external things but instead remains within the agent itself; for instance, the actions of sensing, understanding, and willing. But in the latter kind of action, no change is produced in an external thing; instead the action is done entirely within the agent. “As for the first kind of action, it is obvious that it cannot be the

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<sup>17</sup> See Edmond Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, footnote to sec. 13 of the fifth “*Logical Investigation*”. For an excellent overview of Husserl’s impact on Willard’s views, see, Greg Jesson, “The Husserlian Roots of Dallas Willard’s Philosophical and Religious Works,” *Philosophia Christi* 16 (1) (2014): 7-36.

<sup>18</sup> For a very helpful explanation of the nature of intentionality, see, Greg Jesson, “Is Intentionality More Like Hitting or More Like Hunting?” Gustav Bergmann on Skepticism and Knowledge,” in Egidi, Rosaria, and Bonino, Guido (eds.), *Philosophical Analysis: Fostering the Ontological Turn: Gustav Bergmann (1906-1987)* (München, DEU: Walter de Gruyter, 2013), 125-145.

agent's act of being, for the agent's act of being means something within it, which this sort of action is a flowing out to an act caused by the agent...<sup>19</sup>

Now consider where Aristotle writes,

For the action is the end, and the actuality is the action. Therefore even the word 'actuality' is derived from 'action', and points to the fulfillment.

And while in some cases the exercise is the ultimate thing (e.g. in sight the ultimate thing is seeing, and no other product besides this results from sight), but from some things a product follows (e.g. from the art of building there results a house as well as the act of building), yet none the less the act is in the former case the end and in the latter more of an end than the mere potentiality is. For the act of building is the thing that is being built, and comes to be—and is—at the same time as the house.

Where, then, the result is something apart from the exercise, the actuality is in the thing that is being made, e.g. the act of building is in the thing that is being built and that of weaving in the thing that is being woven, and similarly in all other cases, and in general the movement is in the thing that is being moved; but when there is no product apart from the actuality, the actuality is in the agents, e.g. the act of seeing is in the seeing subject and that of theorizing in the theorizing subject and the life is in the soul (and therefore well-being also; for it is a certain kind of life).<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I.54, a2.

<sup>20</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, The Revised Oxford Translation, Edited by Jonathan Barnes, Vol. 2 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), Bk. 9.1050a, 22-35, 1658-59. For Hume's statement of intentionality see paragraph 7 of his Essay, "Of the Standard of Taste."

Another kind of *ofness*, that of inherence, is showed by *intentional-determinations* and determinations of all sorts, e.g., colors, shapes, sounds, and flavors. But colors, shapes, sounds, and flavors are not *about* anything as my belief that you fear me is about you. It is an intentional determination *of* me, but while not a determination *of* you, it is about you.<sup>21</sup>

The significance of intentionality must not be lost on us. Without intentionality there are no minds in the same sense that without triangularity there are no triangles.<sup>22</sup> “Intentionality”, as Gustav Bergmann rightly asserts, “is the essence of mind.”<sup>23</sup> This is true because what is definitive about the mind is its intentional power to reach out and grasp mind-independent reality, making, among other things, knowledge possible.<sup>24</sup> Reinhardt Grossmann observes,

The intentional nexus must be a unique kind of connection. It seems to be irreducible to anything which we find in the nonmental world. Its occurrence truly distinguishes between a world with minds and a world without minds.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> For more on this understanding of intentionality, see, Dallas Willard, “For Lack of Intentionality,” in Lester Embree and Thomas Nenon (eds.), *Phenomenology 2005, Vol. 5, Selected Essays from North America* (Bucharest: Zeta Books, 2007), 593-611; Dallas Willard, “Intentionality and the Substance of the Self,” *Philosophia Christi* 13 (1) (2011): 7-20; Dallas Willard, “A Critical Study of Husserl and Intentionality (I),” *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 19 (2) (1988): 186-98; and Dallas Willard, “A Critical Study of Husserl and Intentionality (II),” *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 19 (3) (1988): 311-22.

<sup>22</sup> In a different sense, if one holds to the virtually self-evident proposition that thoughts require thinkers, then for the range of mental facts before us, there would be no individual mental states without minds. For an interesting argument for substance dualism from this fact, see, E. J. Lowe, “Why My Body is Not Me: The Unity Argument for Emergentist Self-Body Dualism,” in Andrea Lavazza and Howard Robinson (eds.), *Contemporary Dualism: A Defense* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2014), 245-65.

<sup>23</sup> Gustav Bergmann, *The Metaphysics of Logical Positivism* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1954), ix.

<sup>24</sup> For more on this, see, Dallas Willard, “How Concepts Relate the Mind to Its Objects: The “God’s Eye View” Vindicated?” *Philosophia Christi* 1 (2) (1999): 5-20; and Dallas Willard, “Knowledge,” in Barry Smith and David Woodruff Smith (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Husserl* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 138-167.

<sup>25</sup> Reinhardt Grossmann, *The Structure of Mind* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965), 170-171.

Of course, we are in a world populated by minds. Hence, the logical structure of the world cannot obtain, as it is presently, if there is no mind, no consciousness, no intentionality.<sup>26</sup> So, it seems that if we are to offer a plausible account of what is real intentionality cannot be eliminated. But, does intentionality favor the dependence or the independence of the mind from the body?

### *1.2 Why Think Mind and Body are Independent?*

In order to have a simple way of speaking, let us call our intentional determination *I-facts*, and our non-intentional determinations *P-facts* (physical facts). Returning to our initial problem, we now ask: What are the considerations which have led the majority of persons, including philosophers, to hold that *I-facts* have a significant degree of independence from *P-facts*? There are two principal considerations (or classes of considerations) which have led to this position.

**Specificity:** Most, if not all, *I-fact* can be exactly specified without mention of a single *P-fact* about the person, and no list of *P-facts* can serve to specify any *I-fact*.

We have to use “most” here, because *some* decisions to *do* certain things certainly seem to involve movements of one’s body. The remaining *I-facts*, however, are identified without any direct reference to *P-facts*. Of course, those which *intend P-facts* require for their description *intentions* of such facts; but such an intention (such as aboutness) is not the intended fact itself.

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<sup>26</sup> Gustav Bergmann, *Logic and Reality* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1960/1964), 33.

For example, I now am aware that I see you. This seeing is given to me. I recognize it and distinguish it from the hearing of my words as I utter them. But this seeing is not given to me as any fact about my body. *What* I recognize is not that a certain *P-fact* obtains. Anyone who denies this must indicate *which P-fact* it is that I recognize when I recognize that I am seeing you. But anyone who understands this will immediately find out that it is an impossible task. It is really this consideration which Descartes has in mind when he says:

Thus, simply by knowing that I exist, and seeing at the same time that absolutely nothing else belongs to my nature or essence except that I am a thinking thing, I can infer correctly that my essence consists solely in the fact that I am a thinking thing [or a substance whose whole essence, or nature is to think]. It is true that I may have (or, to anticipate, that I certainly have) a body that is very closely joined to me. But, nevertheless, on the one hand I have a clear and distinct idea of myself, in so far as I am simply a thinking, non-extended thing; and on the other hand I have a distinct idea of body, in so far as this is simple an extended, non-thinking thing. An accordingly, it is certain that I [that is to say, my soul by which I am what I am] am really distinct from my body, and can exist without it.<sup>27</sup>

A contemporary variant of this issue is what Joseph Levine calls the *explanatory gap*: our inability to provide or even comprehend a plausible explanation of how consciousness could depend upon a physical non-conscious substrate.<sup>28</sup> If we cannot deduce

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<sup>27</sup> Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, Vol. 2, translated by John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), meditation 6.78, 54.

<sup>28</sup> Joseph Levine, "Materialism and Qualia: The Explanatory Gap," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 64 (1983): 354-361.

consciousness (*I-facts*) from the physical (*P-facts*), then explaining consciousness *wholly* in terms of *P-facts* seems impossible. Attempts at such an explanation constitute what David Chalmers calls, “the hard problem of consciousness.”<sup>29</sup> As of late, most think the hard problem is unsolvable, leaving the explanatory gap unresolved. Ned Block and Robert Stalnaker observe, “No one has ever given an account, even a highly speculative, hypothetical, and incomplete account of how a physical thing could have phenomenal states.”<sup>30</sup> However, if the phenomenological conception of intentionality is true, then the hard problem of phenomenal consciousness brings with it the harder problem of intentionality.<sup>31</sup>

This, then, is one main type of consideration which has led people to regard the mind (*I-facts*) as independent of the body (*P-facts*). A second main consideration is not unrelated to this first one, but it at least involves a separate emphasis. We may put this emphasis as follows:

**Non-determination:** Predicates involved in *I-facts* (call these *I-predicates*) cannot be determinations of bodies.

What are these *I-predicates*? Here is a list of what we have in mind:

- a. Aboutness or intentionality (specific aboutness)
- b. Truth/falsity
- c. I-relations (relations between thought and reality)

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<sup>29</sup> David Chalmers, *The Conscious Mind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 25.

<sup>30</sup> Ned Block and Robert Stalnaker, “Conceptual Analysis, Dualism, and the Explanatory Gap,” *The Philosophical Review* 108 (1) (1999), 1.

<sup>31</sup> For more on this compounded problem, see, George Bealer, “Materialism and the Logical Structure of Intentionality,” in *Objections to Physicalism*, edited by Howard Robinson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 101-26; and, E. J. Lowe, “There Are No Easy Problems of Consciousness,” *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 2 (3) (1995): 206-71.

- d. Clarity, obscurity or fuzziness
- e. emotional qualities, e.g. love or hate.
- f. Spontaneity (Plato, Laws, Bk. 10: self-moved)
- g. Lack of spatiality or individuality (Theaetetus, Plotinus, Descartes)

Now obviously any argument from predicates assumes that bodies can have only a restricted range of predicates and that things with certain types of predicates cannot have predicates of other types. Perhaps all we know is that some things with *P-predicates*, in fact, do not have *I-predicates*, e.g., pebbles and daisies. But we think that it is clear, in general, that a mere difference in kind of predicate does not mean that the things with the predicate are dependent or independent of each other. That question remains quite open. For example, if *x* is sweet and *y* is white, that leaves it quite open whether or not *x* and *y* have any relation of dependence. Indeed, it also leaves it quite open whether or not *x* and *y* are identical. The same is true if we consider *x* is thinking of Paris and *y* is six feet tall.

This second consideration that has led persons to suspect the independence of *I-facts* and *P-facts* surely does not look conclusive at all. The first consideration also fails to prove independence, simply because the description of what an *I-fact* (or any fact) is tells us nothing about what it depends upon, or what depends upon it. Much more must be said and defended if independence is to be established from such consideration. Dualist treatments of the explanatory gap problem attempt to make such a case.

## ***2. The Identity Thesis***

Let us now look at an argument from the other side, one which purports to prove that *I-facts cannot* be independent of *P-facts*, that intentionality cannot be independent of physicality: the identity thesis. The identity thesis holds that every *I-fact* is, in fact, the

same as a certain collection of particles located in the familiar sort of physical object called a brain. Exactly how we are to describe these collections is not clear, even to physicists. But whatever terms they decide on shall be the ones used to specify these *P-processes* in the brain.

## 2.1 *Contra the Identity Thesis*

Now if we can suppose that the claim of the identity thesis is clear, we can go on to ask: what reason is there to believe that it is true? Why think that the mind just is the brain? No one has ever suggested that there is perceptual evidence for saying that *I-facts* are identical with *P-facts*. For example, people once thought that the Morning Star was not identical to the Evening Star. However, astronomers discovered that what was referred to as “the Morning Star” and “the Evening Star” are in fact identical, as both expressions refer to Venus. This, however, is not parallel with the thesis that *I-facts* are identical with *P-facts*. No one has suggested that there is perceptual evidence that *I-facts* are identical with *P-facts*. The only reason ever given is economy—i.e., all is explained without introducing *I-facts*.<sup>32</sup>

But now we wish to show that the identity thesis is false. If we are going to claim that certain items are identical, we must be able to distinguish them from other things, and from each other. This can be done only in terms of properties and relations. However, *we do not pick out our experiences by means of P-qualities or relations*. Consider the case just mentioned. At a certain time, those who studied the heavenly bodies said that the Morning Star is identical with the Evening Star. Now, this claim of identity presupposes certain differences. To speak roughly, it presupposes that being last visible in the Morning (the Morning Star) is different than being first visible in the Evening (the

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<sup>32</sup> See, for example, Smart, 142.

Evening Star). If this presupposition did not obtain and hold true, then “the Morning Star is identical with the Evening Star” would not differ from “the Morning Star is identical with the Morning Star” (or else “the Evening Star is identical with the Evening Star”). A similar case is presented by the identity of Dr. Jekyll with Mr. Hyde.

We may generalize from such cases in the following way: if identity is asserted between items given with the same determinations, or under the same description, then the identity claim in question is a tautology. For example: “This *F* is identical with this *F*” or “That which *F*’s is identical with that which *F*’s” or “This is identical with this.” If an identity is not tautologous, the items identified must be given with non-identical determinations or descriptions. That is, the condition of a non-tautologous identity being meaningful is a difference in the determinations of the things claimed to be identical. For example, in our Morning Star is identical with the Evening Star case, which is a non-tautologous, true identity claim, the things identified are referred to by means of certain determinations stated alone, and these determinations are not themselves the same (e.g., being last visible in the Morning is different than being first visible in the Evening).

Now let us consider the “identity thesis” in the light of these general considerations about identity claims. The identity thesis asserts that, for example, my seeing of this sheet of paper is (non-tautologously) identical with a certain state of my brain, specifically in terms of physical particles. If we understand the thesis in one way, it is unexceptional, at least so far as the general considerations about identity claims just sketched are concerned. This is where we take the thesis to assert that which has the intentional quality of being a perception of this paper is the same thing as that which has the physical properties and relations. Understood in this way, the claim that my seeing of this sheet of paper is identical with a certain physical state is the same type of claim as the claim that the Morning Star is the Evening Star, or that Dr. Jekyll is Mr. Hyde.

But this interpretation is not what the identity thesis proposes. This would not yield physical-particle-monism. It proposes to say that there are no determinations other than *P-determinations*, that if any determinations at all are had in mind with “my seeing this paper” in “my seeing this paper is identical with a brain state (specified in the terms of physics)”, they must be the very *P-determinations* cited in the second half of the identity claim; for *these are the only determinations there are*. Hence, the identity thesis seemingly reduces to the claim that “my perceiving this paper is identical with a certain brain state” is really the tautology that a certain brain state is identical with itself. But no identity theorist has even said such a thing; and to the contrary, they have explicitly denied that the identities claimed are tautologies.<sup>33</sup> But what alternatives are left? Only, it seems, the following: In “my perceiving this paper is identical with a brain state  $S_1$ ”, with “my perceiving this paper” is had in mind either

1. No determinations at all<sup>34</sup>
2. Certain *P-determinations*, but not exactly the same ones had in mind with “brain state  $S_2$ ”.
3. Certain *non-P-determinations*.

Clearly, (3) falsifies the identity thesis, as it entails that *non-P-determinations* just are *P-determinations*. (2) is factually false. J. J. C. Smart, for example, admits that “I am perceiving this paper” does not mean, “I have such and such a brain-process”.<sup>35</sup> This

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<sup>33</sup> For example, Paul and Patricia Churchland explain that “intertheoretic reduction is at bottom a relation between two distinct *conceptual frameworks* for describing the phenomena...” P. M. Churchland and P.S. Churchland, “Intertheoretic Reduction: A Neuroscientist’s Field Guide,” in Y. Christen and P. Churchland (eds.), *Neurophilosophy and Alzheimer’s Disease* (London: Springer-Verlag, 1992), 21-22.

<sup>34</sup> This is redundant by the general conditions of non-tautological identity claims stated above.

<sup>35</sup> See Smart’s replies to objections (2) and (5) in J. J. Smart, “Sensations and Brain Processes,” *The Philosophical Review* 68 (2) (1959), 141-156.

leaves us with only (1); and it is, indeed, this alternative which both Smart and Armstrong attempt to take. With what success, we shall see.

In fact, what Smart and Armstrong attempt to do is to create an illusion that they are taking (1), while in fact taking (3) and surrendering the thesis of identity. We shall try to show *how* they do this, and then *why* they *must* do it.

## 2.2 *How Smart & Armstrong Embrace (1) and (3)*

Smart and Armstrong each attempt to hold that I pick out my perceiving this paper by means of the relational properties which the *P-event* that it is has to other *P-events*. They deny that we pick it out by means of its qualities. Armstrong's way of putting this is to deny that our grasp of mental events, such as my seeing this sheet of paper, in anyway informs us of the "intrinsic nature" of these events.<sup>36</sup> The relations which, according to Smart and Armstrong, form the content or connotation of our mental concepts are resemblance<sup>37</sup> and causality,<sup>38</sup> with resemblance added to causality to handle certain marginal cases.<sup>39</sup> Strictly speaking, Armstrong uses aptness to cause behavior or aptness to be caused by certain objects. Other identity theorists, such as David Lewis, explicitly hold that, "The definitive characteristic of any (sort of) experience as such is its causal role," and that "these causal roles which belong by analytic necessity to experiences belong in fact to certain physical states."<sup>40</sup> To avoid long-windedness, we shall speak simply of causality.

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<sup>36</sup> D. M. Armstrong, *A Materialist Theory of Mind*, Revised Edition (London: Routledge, 1992), 79.

<sup>37</sup> Smart, "Sensations and Brain Processes," 141.

<sup>38</sup> Armstrong, 79.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>40</sup> David Lewis "An Argument for the Identity Theory," in *Philosophical Papers*, Vol. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983, first published in 1966), 100.

Smart, for example, uses the locution “something is going on which is like what is going on when...” as an equivalent for the statement that “I am perceiving this sheet of paper”. He says:

Notice that the italicized words, namely ‘there is something going on which is like what is going on when,’ are all quasilogical or topic-neutral words. This explains why the ancient Greet peasant’s reports about his sensations can be neutral between dualistic metaphysics of my materialistic metaphysics. It explains how sensations can be brain-processes and yet how a man who reports them need know nothing about brain-processes. For he reports them only very abstractly as “something going on which is like what is going on when...”<sup>41</sup>

Notice how Smart contradicts himself here. He says that when I report my perceptions of this paper I:

- (i) need know nothing of the brain-process which is the perception, yet
- (ii) know that it is like (or that it *resembles*) certain other brain processes.

Notice that (i) reflects the necessity to deny (3) in order to maintain the identity thesis, while (ii) reflects the necessity to have some determinations by means of which to pick out or distinguish the event reported (i.e., my seeing this paper). But (i) and (ii) are contradictory.

Further, likeness or resemblance is not a primitive term in the language of physics. Hence, it falls under the category of *non-P-determinates*.

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<sup>41</sup> Smart, 150.

Further, the brain-processes in question are not inseparable changes in that piece of flesh called the brain, but some change in the states of the ultimate particles of physics. Smart holds that when I report my sensing this paper, I report a resemblance of this particle process with other such processes. This puts him in a different position. For, now Smart must say whether or not he is aware of these processes. If he says he is not, he must then account for the ability to correctly report them, or (something else) for his knowledge that they are occurring. What could he enlist here? Intimate knowledge, some pre-established harmony or some causal relation of the particle-process which is the knowledge (or report) of the seeing of the paper to the particle-process which is the seeing of the paper?<sup>42</sup> Alternatives to awareness of the particle process which allegedly is the perception of the paper, as an account for the ability to report it, all seem extremely unlikely, and no identity theorist has worked them out. And yet if we say that we are aware of these particle processes in the brain, we are claiming direct awareness of the ultimate particles of physics. Surely that is absurd. But we believe it is an absurdity to which one is inexorably pushed when he attempts to identify my perceiving this paper with a physics-particle state of my brain. If we are right, the absurdity deduced proves the identity thesis false.

But it would certainly also be wrong to concede Smart's point that mental reports are "only very abstractly"<sup>43</sup> made, or Armstrong's claim that introspective reports "give us such meager information about the intrinsic nature of mental events."<sup>44</sup> If we say that there is a dog in the corridor, that statement is abstract. It is further *determinable* along such lines as the following: the dog is black, white, etc., is large or small, is male or

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<sup>42</sup> For a related argument against physicalism that exploits this issue, see, J. P. Moreland and Brandon Rickabaugh, "The Plausibility of Property Dualism and the Intelligibility of a Spiritual Substance: A Reply to Churchland," in *Christianity and Science in Dialogue*, ed. Natalia Pecherskaya (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2019).

<sup>43</sup> Armstrong, 40.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

female, is a Spaniel, or a Great Dane, an Afghan, etc. But if I tell you that I have a very sharp and detailed perception of this sheet of paper here in my hand there is very little that could be done to further specify the event which I am reporting; and, in any case, certainly not so much as with the report that “something or other is happening like what happens when...”

Finally, when I report that I see this sheet of paper, I am not reporting any resemblance or causality of aptness to cause what so ever. If I wished to report a resemblance (or aptness to cause or be caused), I know how to do it, and it is not by saying that I see this sheet of paper. Only the *ad hoc* requirements of an absurd theory make philosophers suggest analyses such as Smart’s or Armstrong’s proposal about “I see this sheet of paper.” One cannot say that  $x$  resembles  $y$  without mentioning resemblance. And the reason why I do not mention resemblance when I say “I see this sheet of paper” is because I am not talking about any resemblance. I am stating a single fact, consisting of this having present to me. That fact does not contain any relation of resemblance, and it is only because that fact is what it is, that it may resemble, and may be known to resemble, other facts such as my seeing this other sheet of paper. Similar remarks apply to causality.

Now all of the above criticisms of Smart’s attempt to give a content to the phrase “my seeing this sheet of paper” in terms of resemblance of particle processes can easily be reduplicated with reference to Armstrong simply by reformulating Smart’s claims, replacing claims of likeness of particle-process by claims of the aptness of these processes to be caused by, or to cause, certain sorts of physical events. We shall not bother to do that here, as no difference of principle is involved, and Armstrong’s version of the identity thesis turns out as self-contradictory and contrary to facts as did Smart’s.

### 2.3 *Why Smart & Armstrong Must Embrace (1) and (3)?*

It remains, however, to explain *why* both philosophers get into the absurd position of trying to hold to both (1) and (3) above. The answer is brief: only (1) will allow them to maintain identity, by not requiring a difference of determination specified by “my seeing this sheet of paper”. But only (3) will allow them to meet the general condition of non-tautologous identity claims, viz, that the things said to be identical must be given with non-identical determinations or descriptions. They must have difference to claim identity, but if they have the difference required, they cannot get the identity that they want. So, we think we can take the identity of *I-facts* with *P-facts* as disproven.

### 2.4 *Summary Thus Far*

This returns us, then, to the question of this relation, and, in particular, of their dependence of independence. But before going on, let us summarize our results thus far. We reviewed two main (classes of) considerations which have led many thoughtful persons to conclude that the mental is independent of the physical. But these considerations, we saw, prove only that the mental is distinct from the physical, not that it is independent of the physical body. We then showed, or tried to show, that the attempt of the identity thesis to do away with the *distinctness* of the mental and the physical does not succeed. We would put this result in this way: we have proven that it is *absurd* to think that an *I-fact* could be a *P-fact*. It is as absurd as to think that a shape might be an odor or a sound a color. Intentionality is not reducible to or identical to the physical. Materialists understand and even admit of this difficulty. Jerry Fodor, for example, states,

I suppose that sooner or later the physicalists will complete the catalogue they’ve been compiling of the ultimate and irreducible properties of things. When they

do, the likes of spin, charm, and charge will perhaps appear upon their list. But aboutness surely won't; intentionality simply doesn't go that deep...If the semantic and intentional are real properties [I-facts], it must be in virtue of their identity with (or maybe their supervenience on?) properties that are themselves neither intentional nor semantic. If aboutness is real, it must be something else.<sup>45</sup>

According to Fodor, the rejection of a realist view of intentionality is motivated not by argument, but by "a certain ontological intuition: that there is no place for intentional categories in a physicalistic view of the world; that the intentional can't be naturalize."<sup>46</sup> If we are right, we've offered an argument that explains why intentionality cannot be naturalized, cannot be identical to the physical.

### 3. *The Independence of Body and Soul*

You will clearly see that the previous argument does not prove that any human mind *is, in fact*, independent of a corresponding body, that some disembodied mind or minds actually do exist. We do not think that any *a priori* proof on either side of this question can be made out. But, if we look at empirical evidence, we believe with C. J. Ducasse,

That the balance of the evidence so far (thus) obtained is on the side of the ability of survival (after death) and, in the best cases (studied), of survival not merely of

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<sup>45</sup> Jerry Fodor, *Psychosemantics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), 97.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

memories of the life on earth, but of survival also of the most significant capacities of the human mind, and of continuing exercise of these.<sup>47</sup>

When looked at carefully, empirical evidence for the continued existence of some disembodied persons seems to us such that it would be irrational not to believe that there are some such persons. Regarding the implications of evidential near-death experiences (NDE) for the thesis of mind-body independence, Habermas observes,

Yet it seems safe to say that the most common impression among scholars, it that aspects of this research such as the NDEr's perception of leaving her body and looking down at it from above seem quite strongly to favor a dualist perspective about the self and consciousness.<sup>48</sup>

Of course, the details of NDE studies should be considered more fully.<sup>49</sup> However, the philosophy of mind has largely ignored this set of data, and we mention it here to draw attention to it and its relevance to the independence thesis.

The only sorts of non-empirical or *a priori* consideration which are of use here are (i) those such as were given above, which hope to show that it is not impossible that the mind is independent of bodies; and (ii) those, such as we shall now close with, which try to stretch the imagination and enable one to envision what such a disembodied existence might be like.

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<sup>47</sup> C. J. Ducasse, *A Critical Examination of the Belief in a Life After Death* (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 1961), 203.

<sup>48</sup> Gary R. Habermas, "Evidential Near-Death Experiences, in Jonathan J. Loose, Angus J. L. Menuge, and J. P. Moreland (eds.), *The Blackwell Companion to Substance Dualism* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2018), 243.

<sup>49</sup> See, David Lund, *Persons, Souls and Death: A Philosophical Investigation of an Afterlife* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2009); and J. Steve Miller, *Near-Death Experiences as Evidence for the Existence of God and Heaven* (Acworth, GA: Wisdom Creek Press, 2012).

In this endeavor of stretching our imagination Armstrong, himself a materialist, is of some help.

But disembodied existence seems to be a perfectly intelligible supposition. It may be that a good deal of perception in some sense presupposes that we have a body or at least a position in space. For instance, we see things as oriented in space with respect to us, and it is hard to see what 'us' refers to here if not to our body. But consider the case where I am lying in bed at night thinking. Surely it is logically possible that I might be having just the same experiences, and yet not have a body at all? No doubt I am having certain somatic, that is to say, bodily, sensations. But if I am lying still, these will not very detailed in nature, and I can see nothing self-contradictory in supposing that they do not correspond to anything in physical reality, yet I need be in no doubt about my identity.<sup>50</sup>

H. H. Price also tries to imagine such a disembodied existence from his bed. He remarks:

The next world, I think, might be conceived as a kind of dream-world. When we are asleep, sensory stimuli are cut off, or at any rate, are prevented from having their normal effects upon our brain-centers. But we still manage to have experiences. It is true that sense-perception no longer occurs, but something sufficiently like it does. In sleep, our image-producing powers, which are more or less inhibited in waking like by a conscious bombardment of sensory stimuli, are released from this inhibition. And then we are provided with a multitude of objects of awareness, about which we have desires and emotions. These objects

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<sup>50</sup> David Armstrong, 19.

which we are aware of behave in a way which seems very queer to us when we wake up. The laws of their behavior are not the laws of physics. But however queer their behavior is, it does not disconcert us at the time, and our personal identity is not broken.

“In other words,” says Price, “my suggestion is that the next world, if there is one, might be a world of mental images.”<sup>51</sup> Price is offering a logically coherent description of the “next world” against charges of the inconceivability and logical incoherence of life after death by philosophers such as C. D. Broad, Anthony Flew, and John Hospers, that life after death is inconceivable, logically incoherent, and therefore impossible.<sup>52</sup> For our present purposes, it is sufficient to call attention to these segments of experience with no body referenced as a model of what disembodied existence might be like.

If then, we were to put this picture or model of disembodied existence into conjunction with the phase of embodied existence, we might get a temporally extended model of the person of the following sort. A substantive or subject of change exists from  $t_1$ -  $t_n$  as follows:

***Ontological Phases of Embodied Existence***

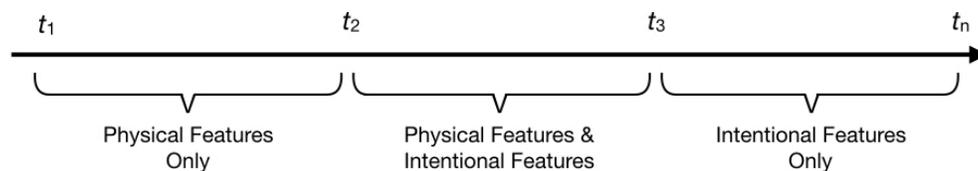


fig. 1

<sup>51</sup> H. H. Price, “Survival and the Idea of ‘Another World’”, in J. R. Smythies (ed.), *Brain and Mind: Modern Concepts of the Nature of Mind* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965), 4.

<sup>52</sup> It is worth noting that Price’s tendencies toward a narrow empiricist manifest themselves strongly in his failure to deal with consciousness-of or intentionality.

$t_2$  and  $t_3$  may make points of radical transformation. Certainly, also, the period from  $t_2$ -  $t_3$  on this model is one wherein vast change occurs in the physical and intentional structures of the self-identified substance involved. Those, such as, Leibniz and Kant, in other centuries who held to the infinite perfectibility of man saw the time after  $t_3$  as simply a natural extension of the period before  $t_3$ .<sup>53</sup>

It is this model which Oliver Wendell Holmes contemplates in his poem “The Chambered Nautilus.” The Nautilus is a tropical sea mollusk having a many-chambered, spiral shell, with a pearly interior. It builds new and longer chambers, houses into them and seals off the last. Reflecting upon this creature and the shell which it finally leaves behind as its mortal remains, Holmes wrote:

Year after year behold this silent toil  
What spread his lustrous coil;  
Still, as the spiral grew,  
He left the past year’s dwelling for the new,  
Stole with soft step its shining archway through,  
Built up its idle door  
Stretched in his last-found home and know no more.

And then Holmes finds a message brought to him by this freaky list creature. It is:

Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul  
As the swift seasons roll!  
Leave thy low-vaulted past!

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<sup>53</sup> See, for example, Gottfried Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics*, sec. 46, and Immanuel Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, sec. 446-47.

Let each new temple, nobler than the last,  
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,  
Till thou at length art free,  
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unarresting sea.

So, then, with our analysis and arguments, we offer you these two pictures to aid your imagination: one of what a disembodied existence might be like; the other of what a substance (or persons) who could move from embodied to disembodied existence might look like. The pictures, of course, do not prove anything about the reality of such an existence or of a transition to it. They are not offered for that purpose, but to aid you in imagining what such realities might be like. Evidence for such realities must lie in the quarters already indicated.

#### *4. Conclusion*

But what, you may ask, does all of this have to do with the price of college and the climate change? Well, let us put it to you this way: in our sermonic and idealistic and moralistic moments, we make much of respecting and loving and valuing persons. We say, along with many others, that life cannot go on in this earth unless we learn to treasure persons. We submit that a part of our problem in this respect derives from an implicit view of what a human being is. If a human being is only an ambulatory, oblong piece of meat and bone, a dense electron cloud, or a natural feedback mechanism of great complexity, you can talk of respect, admiration, love for such a thing all you wish, but the reality of such emotions and maturations will come forth only if you succeed in thinking of human being as something a great deal more than just that. We live in a time where deep uncertainties about what we are drive private and political dynamics for how we live

and love others. We think it has yet to be proven that any humanly desirable society can exist without being based on what could best be called a spiritualistic view of the human person.<sup>54</sup> We have tried in this paper to give some basis for inferring that such a view *needn't* be an illusion.

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<sup>54</sup> For more on this point, see, Dallas Willard, "Grey Matter and the Soul," in Dallas Willard and Gary Black Jr. (eds.), *Renewing the Christian Mind* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2016), 158-160; Dallas Willard, "Understanding the Person: Including the Invisible Parts," in Dallas Willard, *Living in Christ's Presence* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 114-125; Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2002), Ch. 2 and 11; Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1997), 79-93; and Dallas Willard, "Spiritual Disciplines, Spiritual Formation, and the Restoration of the Soul," in *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 26 (1) (1998), 101-109.