

This is Mental!

G O D A N D Y O U R M I N D



"There are some ideas so absurd that only an intellectual could believe them."
-George Orwell



Materialism

Theism

Personhood	arose from impersonal physical processes	from a personal God
Consciousness	from non-conscious physical processes	from the mind of God
Intrinsic value, human rights, worth	from valueless physical processes	from being loved by God
Freedom to will and do	from deterministic physical processes beyond our control	from God’s freedom to will and act
Purpose and meaning	from purposeless, meaningless physical processes	from God’s loving intentions for us
Talent, giftedness	Luck	a gift from God

Martin Dowson, "A biblical philosophy of education", in K. Goodlet and J. Collier (eds) *Teaching well: insights for educators in Christian schools* (Canberra: Barton Books, 2014), 39-51.

THE
UNIVERSE

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Materialism

Theism

Fine-tuning, “Goldilocks”	Blind chance	Kind design
Order	Unexpected luck	Intention of a precise Mind
Beauty	Accidental/ incidental	An aesthetic Mind
Subjective experience: colour, smell, sound, taste, texture	Accidental by-products of colourless, odourless, silent, tasteless, untextured processes. We just happen to perceive them.	God wants us to enjoy our senses.

Martin Dowson, “A biblical philosophy of education”, in K. Goodlet and J. Collier (eds) *Teaching well: insights for educators in Christian schools* (Canberra: Barton Books, 2014), 39-51.



IDEAS
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Materialism

Theism

Truth	Constructed by humans in their circumstances (so contingent and conditional)	From the Creator (consistent, transcendent)
Morality	From non-moral physical processes	From God's moral character

Martin Dowson, "A biblical philosophy of education", in K. Goodlet and J. Collier (eds) *Teaching well: insights for educators in Christian schools* (Canberra: Barton Books, 2014), 39-51.



	Materialism	Theism
Universe began	From nothing by nothing. Self-caused. X causes X. Logic?	God created from nothing (conservation of mass-energy and $e=mc^2$)
Life began	From non-living matter	From a living God

Martin Dowson, "A biblical philosophy of education", in K. Goodlet and J. Collier (eds) *Teaching well: insights for educators in Christian schools* (Canberra: Barton Books, 2014), 39-51.

Physicist Brian Greene

You and I are nothing but constellations of particles whose behaviour is fully governed by physical law. Our choices are the result of particles coursing one way or another through our brains. Our actions are the result of our particles moving this way or that through our bodies. And all particle motion – whether in a brain, a body, or a baseball – is controlled by physics and so is fully dictated by mathematical decree... [and] by the non-negotiable and insensate laws of physics, which determine the structure and function of everything that exists. We are no more than playthings knocked to and fro by the dispassionate rules of the cosmos.

Brian Greene, *Until the End of Time: Mind, Matter, and Our Search for Meaning in an Evolving Universe* (London: Penguin, 2021)

ATHEISTS

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Philosopher Jerry Fodor

“Nobody has the slightest idea how anything material could be conscious”

Jerry Fodor, “The Big Idea: Can There Be a Science of Mind?” *Times Literary Supplement* 3 July 1992, 5.

ATHEISTS

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Neuroscientist Matthew Lieberman

“Given a materialist view of the universe, it makes no sense to talk about consciousness or experience at all. We have absolutely no idea what it is about the three pounds of mush between our ears that allows it to perform this trick of being conscious.”

Matthew D. Lieberman, “Free Will: Weighing Truth and Experience: Do Our Beliefs Matter?” *Psychology Today* 22 March 2012.

ATHEISTS

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Atheist neuroscientist Raymond Tallis

"The attempt to fit consciousness into the material world... has failed dismally."

"Philosophy Isn't Dead Yet", *The Guardian*, 27 May 2013.

ATHEISTS

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Atheist philosopher Colin McGinn

“How can mere matter originate consciousness? Consciousness seems like a radical novelty in the universe, not.. [predicted by] the Big Bang. [We know of nothing] that might explain how ever-expanding lumps of matter might have developed an inner conscious life.” “The brain is just the wrong kind of thing to give birth to consciousness. You might as well assert that numbers emerge from biscuits or ethics from rhubarb.”

Colin McGinn, *The Mysterious Flame: conscious minds in a material world* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 13-15; “Consciousness and cosmology: hyperdualism ventilated.” In: Davies M, Humphreys, G W (eds) *Consciousness*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 160.

ATHEISTS

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Neurologist Susan Greenfield

"How does the water of boring old brain cells and sludgy stuff translate into the wine of phenomenological subjective experience?"

Baroness Professor Susan Greenfield, "The Neuroscience of Consciousness", University of Melbourne, 27 November 2012.

ATHEISTS

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3 CRAZY IDEAS



- 1 They think you can't think about things
- 2 They tell you that you have no identity
- 3 They've decided you have no free will

Thinking about things can't happen at all. The brain can't have thoughts about Paris, or about France... or about anything else for that matter. When consciousness convinces you that you, or your mind, or your brain has thoughts about things, it is wrong.

Alex Rosenberg, *The Atheist's Guide To Reality*:

(London: Norton, 2011), 172

Response:

1. Physical things are not *about* other things.
2. Thoughts are *about* other things.
3. So thoughts are not (only) physical things.
4. So there are real, non-physical things in the universe.

**1. THEY THINK
YOU CAN'T
THINK ABOUT
THINGS**

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"The self, as conveyed to us by introspection, is a fiction. It doesn't exist."

Alex Rosenberg:

"we build up a defining story about ourselves, organised around a sort of basic blip of self-representation. The blip isn't a self, of course, it's a representation of a self"

Atheist philosopher Daniel Dennett

Consciousness Explained (Little, Brown & Co, 1991)

**2. THEY TELL
YOU THAT
YOU HAVE
NO IDENTITY**

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Did I decide to write this book? In some sense, the answer is yes, but the “I” in question is not my conscious experience. In actuality, my brain, in conjunction with its history and the outside world, decided. I (my consciousness) simply witness decisions unfolding.

Annaka Harris

Conscious: A Brief Guide to the Fundamental Mystery of the Mind (New York: Harper Collins, 2019), 34-35

**3. THEY’VE
DECIDED YOU
HAVE NO
FREE WILL**

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Brains “governed by the law of physics” and are not “intentional agents”.

So “a truly scientific, mechanistic view of the nervous system” will “make nonsense of the very idea of responsibility... Any crime, however heinous, is in principle to be blamed on antecedent conditions acting through... physiology, heredity and environment.”

Richard Dawkins:

“Let's all stop beating Basil's car”, www.edge.org/response-detail/11416

**3. THEY'VE
DECIDED YOU
HAVE NO
FREE WILL**

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It's "counterproductive to emphasize that all human behaviour... is determined by a prior state of the universe, and that [criminals] are, at bottom, unlucky – being themselves victims of prior causes that they did not create."

Sam Harris, *Free Will*
(New York: Free Press, 2012), 153

**3. THEY'VE
DECIDED YOU
HAVE NO
FREE WILL**

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RESPONSE



- 1 No physical system has free will. (e.g. A gun can't decide to kill anyone.)
- 2 So no physical system has moral responsibility. (We don't try a gun for murder.)
- 3 We think humans do have (at least some) moral responsibility. (We try a murderer.)
- 4 So humans are not only a physical system.

And we could add:

- 5 So there are real, non-physical things in the universe.

MUST MATERIALISTS BE CONSCIOUSNESS DENIERS?

- 1 Laws
- 2 It emerges
- 3 A mystery. We can't know,
says Colin McGinn.
- 4 Conscious particles?
Pan-psychism?

“Our willingness to accept scientific claims that are against common sense is the key to an understanding of the real struggle between science and the supernatural.”

“prior commitment... to materialism”

“material explanations, no matter how counter-intuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door.”

Biologist Richard Lewontin:

“Billions and billions of demons”, *The New York Review* 9 January 1997, 31.

ALTERNATIVES
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“Consciousness is not physical: it helps us understand physics. Science made immense progress in a time... when everyone was familiar with the concepts of soul and spirit.”

Dr Arie Bos

Arie Bos, *Thinking Outside the Brain Box: Why Humans Are Not Biological Computers* (Floris Books, 2018), 232

ALTERNATIVES
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ARE YOU JUST
PHYSICAL?



“You”, your joys and sorrows, your memories and your ambitions, your sense of personal identity and free will, are in fact no more than the behaviour of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules.

- Sir Francis Crick

The Astonishing Hypothesis: The Scientific Search for the Soul, 1994

“The human brain is a machine which alone accounts for all our actions, our most private thoughts, our beliefs. All our actions are the products of the activity of our brains.”

-atheist neurobiologist Colin Blakemore

The Mind Machine (BBC Books, 1990), 270



mind = brain?

or

mind > brain?

1. DOWNWARD CAUSATION

"Negative thoughts manifest into chemical reactions that can affect your body... decreasing your immunity. By contrast, positive thoughts can actually release neuropeptides that help fight stress and potentially more-serious illnesses." Laughter "increases the endorphins that are released by your brain".

-Mayo Clinic

"Stress Relief from Laughter? It's No Joke" www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/stress-relief/art-20044456



1. DOWNWARD CAUSATION

“neglect is awful for the brain”

Without a person giving affection, attention and stimulation, “the wiring of the brain goes awry.” If you’re lying in your cot “staring at a white ceiling, or no one is talking to you, or no one is soothing you when you get upset”, then your brain areas involved in vision, language and emotion are not wired properly.

Charles Nelson, Harvard paediatrics professor

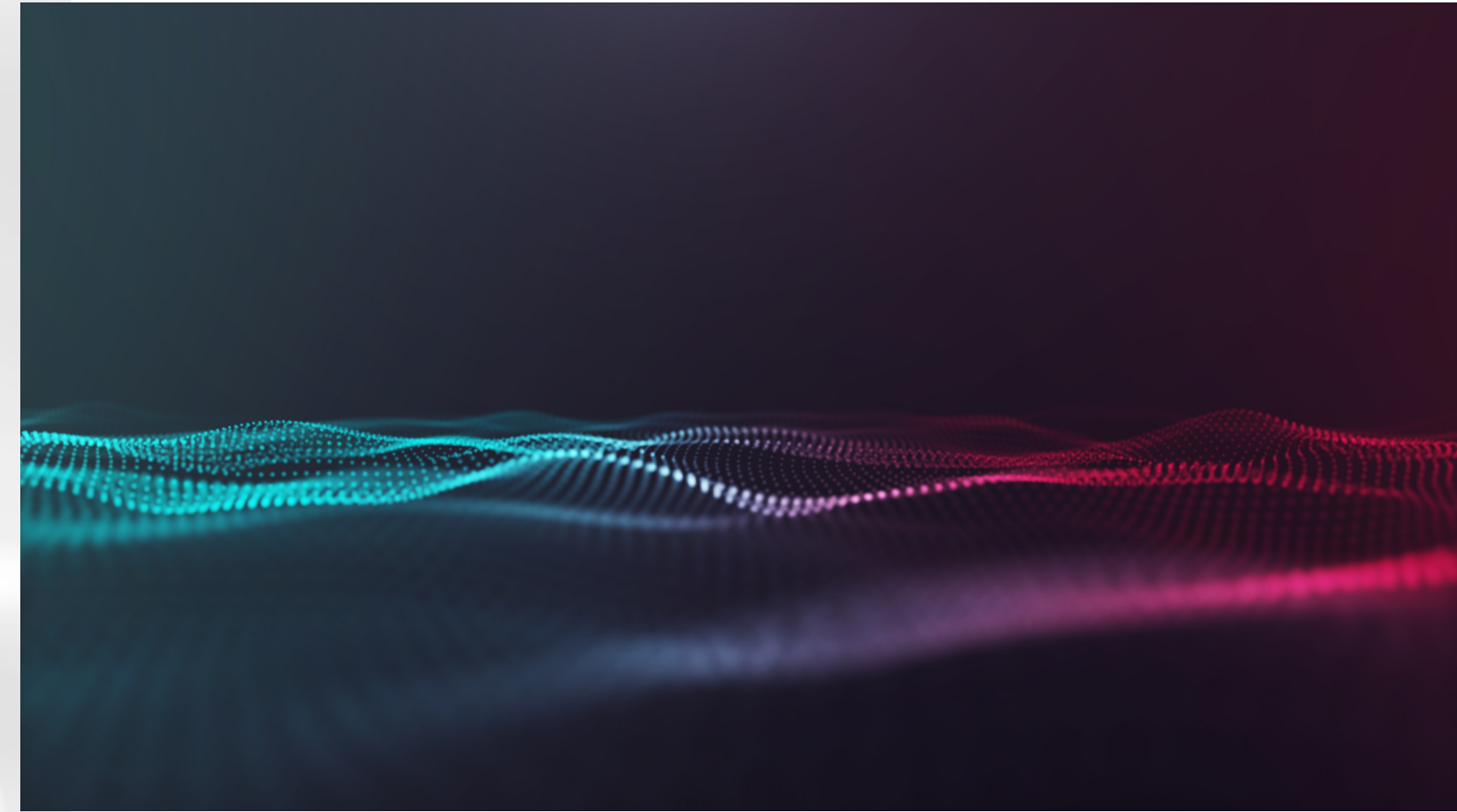
Jon Hamilton, “Orphans’ Lonely Beginnings Reveal How Parents Shape A Child’s Brain”, NPR Feb 24, 2014.
Sue Gerhardt, *Why Love Matters. How Affection Shapes a Baby’s Brain* (Oxford: Routledge, 2004); J. Bick et al, “Effect of Early Institutionalization and Foster Care on Long-term White Matter Development. A Randomized Clinical Trial.”, *JAMA Pediatrics* 196 (3):211-219, 2015.



2. YOUR MENTAL STATE IS NOT YOUR BRAIN STATE



3. YOUR MIND IS FIRST-PERSON, SCIENCE IS THIRD PERSON



TRY THIS LOGIC

- 1 I can make "I" statements. (e.g. "I wonder how my daughter is today?")
- 2 Physical objects can't genuinely make "I" statements. (A thing can't genuinely speak in the first person if it's not a person.)
- 3 So I'm not (only) a physical object.

Adapted from J.P. Moreland, "Christianity, Neuroscience, and Dualism", in J.B. Stump and Alan G. Padgett, *The Blackwell Companion to Science and Christianity* (London: Blackwell, 2012), 470-471.

4. YOU CAN'T EXPLAIN MENTAL EXPERIENCE IN PHYSICAL TERMS

"Conscious subjects and their mental lives are inescapable components of reality not describable by the physical sciences."

-atheist philosopher Colin Nagel

Mind and Cosmos, 41



**5.
YOUR BRAIN HAS
PHYSICAL
PROPERTIES. YOUR
MIND DOESN'T.**



6. UNITY ACROSS TIME

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7. THE BINDING PROBLEM

32



8. YOU (USUALLY) TRUST YOUR THOUGHTS

It seems to me immensely unlikely that mind is a mere by-product of matter. For if my mental processes are determined wholly by the motions of atoms in my brain I have no reason to suppose my beliefs are true. That may be sound chemically, but that does not make sense logically.

-Professor J.B.S. Haldane

"When I Am Dead", in *Possible Worlds and Other Essays* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1932)

8. YOU (USUALLY) TRUST YOUR THOUGHTS

Evolution has “endowed us with senses that hide the truth and display the simple icons we need to survive long enough to raise offspring... You may want truth but you don't need truth. Truth would drive our species extinct. You need simple icons that show you how to act to stay alive. Perception is not an objective window on reality.”

-David Hoffman, *The Case Against Reality: how evolution hid the truth from our eyes.*

(London: Penguin, 2020)

9. **CAN EVOLUTION PRODUCE RELIABLE MINDS?**

With me the horrid doubt always arises, whether the convictions of man's mind, which has been developed from the mind of the lower animals, are of any value or at all trustworthy. Would anyone trust in the convictions of a monkey's mind, if there are any convictions in such a mind?

Charles Darwin

9. CAN EVOLUTION PRODUCE RELIABLE MINDS?

Q: What are the odds of getting 100 decisions correct 75% of the time?

A: 1 in 1,000,000

Alvin Plantinga, The Evolutionary Argument Against Naturalism



9. CAN EVOLUTION PRODUCE RELIABLE MINDS?

Plantinga's Evolutionary Argument Against Naturalism is the "deepest problem" of naturalism, and materialists "have not proposed a credible solution."

"Evolutionary naturalism provides an account of our capacities that undermines their reliability, and in doing so undermines itself."

Atheist philosopher Thomas Nagel:

"A Philosopher Defends Religion", *The New York Review* September 27, 2012.

William Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos*, p.XXXX

AND SO...

If you follow materialism to its logical conclusion, you must believe that there are no logical conclusions.

Rational people cannot believe materialism because if it's true, there are no rational people.

You can't rationally believe your thoughts are the result of chemical particles following the laws of physics or you wouldn't trust them. You're much more likely to have a (mainly) trustworthy mind if a rational Mind had created it.





Why do Sherlock's thoughts
work?



1. The content of one thought causes the content of the next, and so on.
2. His train of thought follows rules of logic.
3. His thoughts can be true or false about things in the world.
4. His thoughts happen in one mind.
5. He can do science.
6. His thoughts are reliable.
7. Sherlock's not on drugs.