**arguing from consciousness to god’s existence**

**via lowe’s dualism**

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**Abstract** Arguments from consciousness to God’s existence (ACs) contend that physicalism is too problematic to explain the mind’s ultimate source. They add that theism probably better explains this source in terms of God making us in his own image (with conscious, unified, rational minds). But ACs are problematic too. First, physicalism has various competitors beside theism. Russellian monism and dual-aspect theory are examples. Second, all these theories, including theism, are seriously flawed. For example, it’s tied to traditional dualism, which has causal issues (according to Murphy, Churchland, and other physicalists). But we argue that this theistic dualism can be refined to avoid its issues—and the issues in all other theories. So, it probably explains the mind’s origin better than other theories. We rely here on Lowe’s dualism, where the mind’s subject exists immaterially yet spatially, and is a unified, simple entity (unlike neural aggregates with their quite separate parts). This turns the tables on Churchland, Murphy, and other advocates for scientism.

**Abbreviations** RP: reductive physicalism. NRP: nonreductive physicalism. DAT: dual-aspect theory. RM: Russellian monism. DFT: dualist field theory.

**1. Introduction**

Our separate, soggy neurons differ radically from our unified, “technicolor” minds. So, relations between them are mysterious. For example, physicalist claims that everything is physical raise the issue of how minds and brains can be the same, while dualist claims that the two differ radically raise the issue of how they can interact. This perennial “mind-body” problem, together with the problem of our ultimate origins, are two of the greatest mysteries we face. This paper tries to address both by investigating how our minds and closely associated bodies ultimately arose. Is this explicable purely physically? Or perhaps (for example) theistically via God?

The most obvious initial question here concerns what minds and bodies are. Physics has replaced old ideas of bodies with newer ideas of matter-energy. So, the focus is now on the brain’s material structures and energy states. These are fundamentally electromagnetic in nature.

Minds are more nebulous entities, but they do have well-known characteristics. Arguably, minds are most broadly characterized by their intelligence, which is their problem-solving ability, and by their consciousness, which is their privately experienced inner life (this is lost in dreamless sleep). This consciousness has qualia (conscious qualities such as pain or fear). It also has unity—for example, we experience the shapes, colors, and evoked feelings of a perceived face as a unified whole. This unity occurs in ways that prevent us from accessing each other’s experience (privacy). The mind’s intelligence arises mainly from the subject (self), which is the mind’s controlling center (yet parts of the mind lie outside this attentive control, Lamme, 2020.) In legal or moral terms, the subject is a person—in religious terms, it’s linked to the spirit or soul. The subject’s feelings and viewpoints shape what it’s like to be that subject (subjectivity). In sum, the key characteristics of minds are their *consciousness*,[[1]](#endnote-1) including its *qualia and unity*, and their *intelligent subject*, including its powers of perception, emotion, and thought.

This paper has five more sections. (§2) We sketch existing arguments from consciousness to the existence of God (ACs), which basically argue that the mind’s ultimate source is probably better explained theistically than physically. (§3) We argue that the physical account competes not just with the theistic one but with various others too—some of which even clash with theism. (§4) The issues facing each of these theories are listed. (§5) We add that theistic dualism (defined in §3.2) can be refined to avoid its issues, so (§6) it’s probably the best account of the mind’s origin.

**2. Formulations of AC**

ACs generally contend that the existence of consciousness (or minds, or qualia, or mind-brain correlations) is ultimately explained better in theistic than physicalist ways, given physicalism’s flaws. This theism is construed as monotheism, not polytheism, for the former is simpler, more coherent, and more principled. ACs are arguably abductions offering best explanations, instead of inductions offering probable generalizations, or deductions offering necessary conclusions.

A precursor to recent ACs is in Locke (1690, IV:X:10). He argued that consciousness can’t come from nonconscious matter: “incogitative matter and motion, whatever changes it might produce of figure and bulk, could never produce thought . . . Divide matter into as many parts as you will . . . They knock, impel, and resist one another . . . and that is all they can do” (cf. Leibniz, 1714 below). So, thought can only come from a thinking thing. Therefore, the supreme cause of conscious things (which must exist, he argues elsewhere) has to be God. Simply put, our thought can’t come from our bodies, for figure and bulk just beget more figure and bulk, instead thought must ultimately come from a thinking being (God).

More recently, Adams (1992) argued that physicalism has serious troubles explaining the existence of the mind’s qualia. Only God can explain this, for God is a mind and is arguably our creator. He stressed that this AC isn’t a “knockdown proof” for theism, just a way of supporting it.

Swinburne (2004) argued that if my brain’s hemispheres were put into two different skulls, I couldn’t tell where I really am by looking at them. Instead, I’m an immaterial substance. Since the soul is immaterial, its correlation with brain events can’t be accounted for scientifically. So, the explanation for the soul’s existence is probably a personal (person-based, theistic) one.

Moreland (2009) cogently argued for the premise that physicalism can’t explain mind-brain correlations. He notes that traditional mind-brain reductions fail due to numerous arguments (see §4 below). He adds that recent nonreductive physicalism isn’t really serious physicalism. In the latter, the existence and causal powers of macroevents (such as minds) reduce to those of physical microevents. But, in nonreductive physicalism, minds instead emerge from brains. This is property dualism, where minds exist nonphysically. So, both types of physicalism fail to show that minds exist physically. Since our consciousness can’t be physically explained, it must ultimately be explained by a conscious being (God). Only the personal theistic account, not impersonal physicalist accounts, explains the mind’s existence and its correlation with brains.[[2]](#endnote-2)

(Interestingly, Kimble & O’Connor (2011) argue that these ACs fail to refute some physicalisms. However, their own physicalism rests on problematic claims about phenomenal concept strategies and minds emerging from brain organization—see below.)

A simple summary of these ACs might be as follows.

(1) The ultimate origin of consciousness (mind) has a physical (scientific) or theistic (personal) explanation.

(2) The former explanation is relatively problematic.

(3) So, the latter explanation is probably correct.

However, as already suggested, we will argue below for the following AC formulation. It refers to additional theories that compete with theism—and to refinements of a version of theism.

(1) Physicalism, theistic dualism, and other theories yield explanations for how consciousness ultimately arises.

(2) All these theories have problems.

(3) But theistic dualism can be refined to avoid all these problems, including its own.

(4) So, it’s probably the best explanation.

The following four sections will address these four propositions one by one in turn.

**3. Various Theories Explain the Mind’s Origin**

Our AC’s first premise above is that “Physicalism, theistic dualism, and other theories yield explanations for how consciousness ultimately arises.” We’ll now sketch these competing theories. While some forms of idealism will yield spiritual accounts akin to theistic dualism, the physicalism, dual-aspect theory, mysticism, and Russellian monism won’t. The details in these sketches will pave the way for the next two sections, which point out problems in these details, then try to eliminate theistic dualism’s problems so that it can best explain the mind’s origin.

**3.1 Physicalist Theories**

*Reductive physicalism* (RP) is a radical form of physicalism. The latter’s claim that everything is physical typically construes the physical as the entities and laws posited by physical sciences. From astronomy to particle physics, these sciences have been successful due to their testable theories based on observable entities and a rigorous method for eliminating subjectivity and error. Yet they face formidable challenges in explaining the origins of the inner and outer worlds.

In the RP of the 1950s (e.g., Smart, 1959), the entities and causal powers of macroevents, such as minds, reduce to those of physical microevents, such as neurons firing. For example, just as water was found to be H20, pain will be found to be nothing but brain events. This reflects paradigmatic forms of physical science, such as atomic theory. The mind’s origins are explained via principles of physics, chemistry, and Darwinian-based biology.

*Nonreductive physicalism* (NRP) replaced RP in the 1970s, as computational neuroscience and functionalist theories of mind appeared. The main impetus for NRP was Putnam’s (1967) argument that reducing pain to neural events such as pain detectors firing would have to hold for all species across evolutionary history. He saw this as improbable. (Indeed, such detectors may even transform functions via neural plasticity.) In contrast, pains are always functions, i.e., causal roles in cognition mediating tissue damage and avoidance behavior. Pain functions are abstract here (Kim, 1996), in contrast to RP, where pains are concrete neural substances. In Putnam’s view, abstract pain functions can be realized (embodied) in multiple hardwares across evolution.

These mental functions are widely seen as creating emergent cognitive abilities irreducible to the neural level realizing them. This gives cognitive science autonomy from physical science, and casts mental functions as cognitive information processing operations (computations). This has implications for explaining the mind’s origins. For example, in Murphy & Brown (2007), minds consist of brain functions united by circuits firing synchronously in feedback loops between the cortex and thalamus. Minds have autonomy in that neural mechanisms that feed up into higher levels are superseded by top-down feedbacks with autonomous functions of language and reason.

While the mental is irreducible to the physical here, the mental still supervenes (depends) on physical events in that the mental doesn’t change without corresponding physical change. This bare relation is fleshed out in terms of realization. Supervenience is typically seen as necessary to NRP (Kim, 2000) and even to RP (Stolar, 2015). For example, supervenience divides nonphysicalist substance dualism, where the mental and physical exist as independent substances, from physicalist property dualism, where the mental exists nonphysically, but its causality is physical in that the mental is a supervenient property of physical substances.

**3.2 Other Theories**

*Theistic dualism* is most associated with Descartes’ substance dualism. In his *Meditations*, he says that bodies are material and extended substances, while minds are immaterial and spatially non-extended substances that are our essences. Unlike the mind, the body is just a physical machine. Yet the two interact via the pineal gland, he says in *The Passions of the Soul*. The mind is simple and indivisible, unlike the perishable body: “when I consider the mind, or myself . . . I am unable to distinguish any parts within myself; I understand myself to be something quite single and complete” (Meditation 6). (It might be added that because the self is the mind’s controlling center, it can’t be divided into parts like a cake. Of course, brain hemispheres can be severed apart, but what arises isn’t one self in two parts—which would contradict Descartes—but a separate self in each hemisphere.) Concerning how our minds originate, he adds in Meditation 3 that he has an idea of a perfect being within him that couldn’t come from his own imperfect mind, and thus must come instead from God. This implies that his own reason and morality imperfectly reflect God’s.

*Dual-aspect theory* (DAT) is most associated with Spinoza’s *Ethics*. Here, unlike in Descartes’ substance dualism, there’s only one substance, called “God” or “Nature,” for it’s the only thing capable of existing by itself. It has infinite aspects, yet we’re aware of only the mental and physical ones. Also, unlike dualism, the mental and physical don’t exist apart from God. Further, this God or Nature lacks personality and purposes (so, it’s not even a mind, though it has a mental aspect). Instead of having purposes, this sole substance just unfolds necessarily according to its own inner logic. Humans aren’t autonomous beings but just reflect this unfolding substance. Our choices are thus illusory. Ethics and freedom center on resigning ourselves to our true nature. So, DAT’s account of how minds arise as aspects clashes deeply with theistic dualism.

*Mysticism* resembles DAT. Both depart from theism by de-emphasizing choices and purposes, and by emphasizing the underlying unity of everything in a single eternal substance. For example, in the Brahma Sutras, Samkara’s mysticism[[3]](#endnote-3) treats the world’s ultimate, underlying reality as the immanent, impersonal spirit. Only this one oceanic consciousness exists—all else just appears to exist. One difference between Samkara’s and Spinoza’s monism is that only Samkara treats physical objects and mental subjects as mere appearances—as illusory. Questions about how minds arise are thus irrelevant in this mysticism—though not in dualist forms of mysticism, where minds arise from the oceanic consciousness.

*Idealism* treats reality as fundamentally mental, which reverses RP. The physical world derives from minds or ideas. For example, Berkeley’s (1710) subjective idealism treats the physical world as collections of perceptions in our minds and God’s. So, in seeing the world, we see the face of God. Hegel’s (1857) absolute idealism treats reality as a slumbering spirit that appears as the objective world via perception and as minds via introspection. Its self-awareness and freedom arise dialectically as it reflects on the world, becomes self-aware, and progresses. This culminates in civilization based on liberty but disciplined by rational law. While this monism differs from the theistic dualism above, both give spirit-based accounts of how minds arise. Some versions of idealism could quite conceivably adopt theism’s claim that God made us in his image.

*Russellian monism* (RM) clashes with theistic dualism’s account of the mind’s origins. It claims that physics’ mathematical accounts describe the world only in terms of structures and dynamics (drawing on Russell, 1927). For example, energy fields are described via their patterns of effects on particles. Physics is thus seen as omitting the underlying nature of the fields—it shows what fields do, not what they are. RM calls these underlying natures “quiddities.” They ground physics’ basic entities and are conscious. (This is panpsychism, where consciousness pervades nature.) Without this ground, the world would be abstract structure, lacking substance or quality. So, this extrinsic structure needs “intrinsic properties so that the world has some substance to it” (Chalmers, 1996, p. 153). Simply put, RM claims that while physics describes the world just in mathematical terms, these are grounded in underlying conscious entities. Here, consciousness is the underlying, intrinsic nature of physical events, and thus supervenes on physical events. There’s no room for theism here. Minds arise instead in physical ways, like those in physicalism above—but without emergence or reduction (rather, the mental is the physical’s underlying nature).

**3.3 Summary**

We’ve sketched various theories above in support of our first premise that “Physicalism, theistic dualism, and other theories yield explanations for how consciousness ultimately arises.” Most of these theories differ from the theistic dualism and physicalism that existing ACs focus on. The next steps are to evaluate the credibility of these theories, then ascertain which is best.

**4. All these Theories Have Problems**

Our AC’s second premise above is that “All these theories have problems.” The problems in physicalism are especially numerous and serious.

**4.1 Problems in Physicalism**

*Reductive physicalism* raises many familiar issues, including the conceivability and knowledge arguments of Kripke (1980) and Jackson (1982), respectively. Both point to an epistemic gap between the mental and physical involving what we can conceive or know about qualia. Then, an ontological gap is inferred, and minds are said to exist nonphysically. For example, Jackson considers a color-blind person who learns all about color vision from neuroscience, yet only actually experiences colors later. At this later time, this person gets new knowledge that is outside physical science and thus nonphysical, counter to physicalist claims that everything is physical.

But Levine (1993) replies that these arguments just threaten physicalism epistemologically in terms of what we can know, not metaphysically in terms of what exists. For “[t]he common thread in the responses to both Kripke and Jackson is that their thought experiments demonstrate only an epistemological divide between different modes of access to what may, for all we know, be [ontologically] the very same phenomenon.” We can’t demonstrate that our ideas about the world actually reflect what exists there.

While these two arguments have shortcomings, RP still faces a strong third argument—the explanatory argument of Levine (1983). Its point is that neural accounts of pain-detector networks don’t explain how pain feels. In contrast, there is no such explanatory gap in the physical account of water in terms of H2O molecules—so that reduction remains intelligible. Similarly, Leibniz (1714) argued that if we could enter into our bodies like we enter a mechanism such as a mill, we’d see just figures and motions—not anything by which to explain a perception. The two differ so starkly that it seems unintelligible to identify them (cf. Locke, 1690 above). Afterall, if visual images are identical to brain events, wouldn’t we be able to see images in brains?

Additionally, all forms of physicalism face “easy” problems concerning which neural events correlate with the mind—notably, the mind’s qualia, unity, and subject. They’re called “easy” to contrast them with the “hard” problem (illustrated by reductionism above) concerning what makes these correlates conscious instead of nonconscious. These easy problems can be only briefly sketched here.

To start with, neuroscience hasn’t shown how labeled lines and cross-line comparisons in sensory circuits differ enough to account for all the quite different qualia (colors, pains, etc.) we experience. Testable alternative accounts of how these qualia arise are hard to come by (for details, see Jones & Larock, 2023). So, it’s hard for neuroscience to explain how minds arise.

Nor has neuroscience explained how experiences can unite to form overall thoughts and feelings, and the overall subject who owns them. For example, after much investigation, there’s little evidence that either the synaptic connections of neurons, nor their synchronous firing, can account for this unified experience and unified subject. While neural hubs do help unify lower circuits, there’s no place where all information converges—nor any mechanism there (synaptic, synchronic, etc.) to bind the information (for details, see Larock & Jones, 2019).

*Nonreductive Physicalism* NRP dominates philosophy today, but it has serious problems. The following four don’t cover old ones such as the Chinese brain, Chinese room, or Twin Earth.

First, in NRP’s property dualism, consciousness emerges once brains evolve to a certain level of functional organization in their computational circuitry. But, as Strawson (2006) and others ask, how can fully formed consciousness pop into existence from evolving processing that previously lacked consciousness? This seems like magic where anything goes.

Second, NRP’s functionalism fails to account for qualia. Red’s contrast to green is causally relevant to discriminating light wavelengths. But the conscious red quality in itself, apart from this causality, is irrelevant to functionalism’s causal view of minds. So, it fails as an account of minds.

Third, Putnam’s foundational argument for functionalism was that pain is a function realizable in multiple hardwares—not the same sensory detectors in all species across evolutionary history. But with the rise of molecular biology, evidence for the latter option has steadily grown, even in cases of neural plasticity (Jones & Hunt, 2023, §2.5). This challenges NRP’s foundations.

Fourth, NRP is obscure about how its abstract information-processing functions relate to both the qualia we experience and our soggy neurons, neither of which are abstract. Information is abstract for several reasons. (a) Information is a formal concept defined in relational terms, such as reductions in uncertainty or differences that make a difference. These relations are abstract. (b) Information is realized in multiple hardwares and is thus abstracted from any particular hardware. (c) The blind, mechanical activities of hardwares (e.g., neurons firing) only become meaningful information as we impose high-level functions on them (e.g., facial recognition). So, information states are abstract, theoretical constructs in the minds of scientists (Haugeland, 1985).[[4]](#endnote-4)

NRP thus ends up with three quite different entities—abstract information, soggy neurons, and conscious pains. This deeply obscures their relationships of identity, emergence, aspects, realization, and grounding. (Physicalists could avoid these abstractions, but not without costs.[[5]](#endnote-5))

These relations are obscure in various ways. (a) NRP usually treats pains as information processing functions realized in multiple hardwares. This *identification* of pains with abstract information is no more intelligible than identifying pains with soggy neurons, as in RP. Pains are qualities that we feel, not abstract relations in logic gates and qualia spaces. Similarly, coded images lack color or shape, just as computer models of storms lack wind or rain. (b) *Non-identity* relations between information and pains are obscure too. For example, Chalmers (1996, p. 305) says, “experience is information from the inside; physics is information from the outside.” The obscurities in these aspect and grounding relations are discussed below in §4.2. (c) It’s unclear how abstract information processing gets “*realized in*” neural circuits. Again, this seems no less mysterious than Plato’s doctrine that ideal forms are embodied in (present in) the world. (d) It’s unclear how the abstract and concrete can be *causally* related. Returning to an issue above, it’s often said that pains emerge along with the functional organizations of neurons. This is no less mysterious than Pythagoras’ doctrine that the universe is constructed out of numbers (Jones, 2023). So, radically different pains, neurons, and information render all their relations obscure.[[6]](#endnote-6)

**4.2 Problems in Other Theories**

*Theistic dualism* faces various familiar causal problems. Patricia Churchland (2013) and Nancey Murphy (2006)[[7]](#endnote-7) illustrate longstanding physicalist skepticism of Descartes’ traditional dualism, in which nonphysical minds interact with physical bodies. How can our immaterial, nonspatial minds get the energy needed to move our bodies? How can the motion of particles across visual systems produce images in nonspatial minds? And how does divine causation work when God creates us? These issues are arguably just as serious as those in the other theories, including physicalism. So, theistic dualists have work to do if they hope to give the best explanation of the mind’s origins.

*Dual-aspect theory* faces problems with its claim that the mental and physical are aspects of God or nature. This evades traditional dualism’s obscure mind-body interactions, yet ends up with even more obscure causality. For all causation is shifted to a deeper level. The nature of this deeper level is profoundly obscure, for it isn’t mental or physical, but some underlying nature. Moreover, it’s hard to see how its causality, which is necessary and devoid of purposes, can yield physical causality that can be indeterministic and mental causation that can include purposes. Finally, aspect relations are obscure. They’re only grasped in metaphorical terms of reflections or perspectives, not literal terms. This is by far the most mysterious theory of how minds arise.

*Idealism* raises problems with its claim that matter and bodies only really exist in the form our perceptions or God’s thoughts. This basically treats bodies (including brains) as figments of minds. But why then do our minds depend so tightly on our bodies? For example, damaging our brains damages our minds. Also, communications between minds depend on bodily activities. Both facts are easily explained if bodies exist apart from minds, produce minds, and transmit signals between minds. But both facts are perplexing if bodies only exist as figments of minds.

*Russellian monism* says that physical science describes the world purely in mathematical terms, which are grounded in underlying conscious entities. While RM is a genuine competitor of theistic dualism in explaining the mind’s origins, it faces a serious problem. Physical science’s account of brains is cast in abstract in terms of information processing, so how can these *abstract* information activities be grounded in conscious entities? This is no less mysterious than Plato’s doctrine that ideal forms are embodied in matter.

**4.3 Pervasive Problems with Free Will**

Explaining the mind and its origins requires an account of all its traits and powers. Theories that diminish some of these traits and powers are not theories that genuinely explain the mind—unless they can give compelling reasons for this diminishing. For example, we argued above that physicalism fails to account for the mind’s key trait of qualia. We’ll now argue that most of the theories above diminish the mind’s causal powers and free will without compelling reasons.

Free will is the subject’s ability to choose between options without constraint, consonant with moral responsibility. A major obstacle to free will is the manipulation argument, which says that if we’re manipulated by external forces to perform an action, we can’t be held responsible for that action. Further, if our actions are wholly determined by external factors outside our control (such as physical laws or social and biological forces), then we lack free will and responsibility because we’re wholly constrained by these forces and are mere puppets of them.

(This manipulation argument thwarts prevalent soft determinist claims that our choices are free if they’re self-determined, i.e., autonomous. But it doesn’t thwart the alternative indeterminist claims that our choices are free if they aren’t determined or constrained. For this claim rejects the manipulation argument’s determinist premise. Still, the indeterminist claim is arguably insufficient on its own for free will. For without any capacity for self-determination, we can’t be considered free—and this self-determinism is thwarted by the manipulation argument.)

This manipulation argument applies to the DAT and mysticism above. Here, our mental lives just passively reflect events in the deeper, underlying being that determines all events. We’re just puppets of this being, mistakenly thinking that we’re free.

But this manipulation argument doesn’t apply if our choices have their own autonomous dynamics apart from external forces. For example, in theism, we’re created in God’s image and face the free, uncompelled choice of whether to embrace him. We aren’t mere puppets of God here. The same applies to those versions of idealism compatible with this theist claim.

Turning to physicalism, its reductive form treats all causality as purely physical. We have no control over physical laws, we’re puppets of them. Similarly, in NRP, the mental supervenes on the physical. RM agrees, for it treats mental events as the underlying, intrinsic nature of physical events governed by physical laws. Minds can’t escape the grip of external causes in these views.

But supervenience is a highly problematic account of mental causality. Supervenience gets its appeal largely from the success of physics in explaining physical behaviors, and from the close correlations between mental and physical events. But it’s a big leap of faith from all this to the thesis that the mental doesn’t change without corresponding physical changes. It’s unclear at this stage how much mental events depend on neural ones. One problem is that neuroscience hasn’t explained cognition even at simple perceptual levels. Creative imagination may have nonphysical dynamics for we really know (Jones & LaRock, 2023). Supervenience is also problematic because the metaphysics of the NRP and RM that it’s based on suffers from various intelligibility problems above concerning abstract causes, emergent consciousness, multiple realizations, et cetera.

Much the same applies to the epiphenomenalism of NRP and RM, which goes hand in hand with their supervenience. In epiphenomenalism, minds arise from brains, but don’t affect them. Conscious events lack their own causal powers and just obey the physical causality they supervene on. Epiphenomenalists realize that this sounds paradoxical, so they argue that there’s just no way of avoiding it—it’s a last-ditch position they’re forced into. But this last-ditch strategy must give compelling *metaphysical* and *empirical* reasons for why epiphenomenalism must be accepted. Otherwise, it will continue to be not taken seriously.

Epiphenomenalism’s *metaphysical* presuppositions are largely the arguments above for physicalism, NRP, RM, and supervenience. So, its intelligibility is threatened by metaphysical issues such as emergent consciousness and abstract causes. This makes epiphenomenalism’s last-ditch strategy dubious, for we aren’t really forced to accept its problematic presuppositions.

**Kim: nrp>epiph wch demeans M&MC. Use this to reinf my claim: Nrp actly is epi**.

Nor are there strong *empirical* arguments that compel us to accept epiphenomenalism’s paradoxical claims. It’s advocates often point to experiments by Libet (1985), which show that conscious decisions about when to push a button were preceded by readiness potentials arising in the motor cortex. This indicates that the decision was caused by nonconscious brain activity, not conscious urges to act. Some authors go so far as to conclude that the brain causes all our actions, then makes us think that we consciously executed them. In *The Illusion of Conscious Will*, Wegner says that nonconscious brain mechanisms create all our thought and action, as well as our illusion of “perceiving the thought as causing the action” (p. 98).[[8]](#endnote-8) But Pockett’s (2006) more circumspect review of the evidence concludes that while some motor actions arise nonconsciously, there’s no evidence concerning whether deliberative actions do so. It’s not surprising that some motor (and rote learning) tasks are carried out preconsciously. The crucial point is that there’s no evidence that serious deliberation and planning are.

Another source of evidence for epiphenomenalism could be that there’s no evidence from neuroscience for mental causes of neural events. This aligns with prevalent physicalist beliefs that the physical world is governed solely by physical causes, so there are no gaps for mental causes to fit into (e.g., McLaughlin, 1994). But this argument only works if neuroscience is fully mature and has full accounts of cognition. Yet, as just noted, it hasn’t even explained low-level cognition yet. Dualism will be refined below to show how higher-level thought could have emergent dynamics.

This brings us to sources of evidence against epiphenomenalism. One such source offers a further reply to the “no gaps” claim above. It comes from Darwinian evolution. Significant levels of cerebral energy are needed to maintain consciousness.[[9]](#endnote-9) So, how would this costly phenomenon have evolved if it had no effects on survival or procreation (Larock & Jones, 2019)? The obvious response is that what evolved by natural selection was certain neural events, and consciousness is just along for the ride. But this response fails to explain why survival promotes brains that have epiphenomenal minds—instead of brains that wholly lack minds, or brains that interact with minds (cf. Walter, 2024). Without a compelling explanation here, why should epiphenomenalism’s masses of skeptics accept its highly paradoxical claims?

A further source of anti-epiphenomenalist evidence is introspection. The point isn’t that it refutes epiphenomenalism, but just that it yields considerable evidence that we make conscious decisions, while science just gives scant evidence that the decisions are made nonconsciously.

Consider the introspective evidence that moral choices—or even judgments of which foods taste best or which wines rank highest—involve direct conscious comparisons of sensory and emotional qualities. There’s ample evidence, easily observed, that we make such decisions. In contrast, there’s little evidence that the decisions are instead made by nonconscious mechanisms. As noted above, the evidence that some motor activity is caused nonconsciously doesn’t establish that deliberative decisions are caused nonconsciously. Nor does current neuroscience’s inability to find conscious causes in cognition establish that mature neuroscience won’t find any either.

Moreover, while there’s a lot of easily observed evidence for conscious decision-making, finding evidence for nonconscious decision mechanisms is formidable. These mechanisms are largely unknown—and highly elaborate. First, in the wine-tasting example, these mechanisms would compare how wines taste then decide which taste best, all in quite mysterious nonconscious ways. Second, the mechanisms would then cause the illusion that we were consciously comparing wines. Third, this illusion would extend to all our trains of thoughts and discussions about the wines, for in each and every thought and word, the cause is nonconscious, not conscious. Fourth, not only are these trains of thought therefore *illusory*, but so is the subject that supposedly directs them all. These nonconscious mechanisms thus go to elaborate lengths to create all our thoughts and actions, and to then fool us into believing that it’s these thoughts which control the actions.

This returns us to the evolution argument. Why would evolution go to such elaborate lengths to create experiences that play no role in our action, then additionally fool us into thinking we do control our action? Why on earth is our survival best promoted by brains that have all these epiphenomenal experiences—instead of by brains that lack them, or that interact with them? Without an answer here, why accept epiphenomenalism’s paradoxical—and *arbitrary*—claims?

So, there’s lots of introspective evidence against epiphenomenalism, but scant scientific evidence for it. Instead of *postulating elaborate nonconscious mechanisms that have inexplicable evolutionary origins and are based on scant evidence*, it seems far simpler to *stick with the ample, easily observable evidence from introspection that we consciously make decisions*. All this hardly bodes well for paradoxical epiphenomenalist theory, which so badly needs supporting evidence.

(These same criticisms about paradoxical claims based on scant evidence also apply against DAT and mysticism above. For they too claim that our decisions and aims are illusory.)

Epiphenomenalism thus seems like a last-ditch theory not because there’s no other option available, but instead because it’s a flimsy, last-ditch effort to save a deeply flawed physical view of minds. NRP doesn’t explain qualia or their causal powers—it just deflates them. Arguably, its supervenience and epiphenomenalism are just physicalist dogmas serving the dogma of scientism.

Not only is NRP (and RM too) based on scant empirical evidence and problematic metaphysics, but it’s also deeply impoverished. For what’s of real intrinsic worth in life—our conscious feelings and aspirations—actually play no role in how we interact with each other. Nor does it even play any role in how we think about each other from moment to moment. Again, it doesn’t explain our minds—it just diminishes and impoverishes them.

NRP advocates aren’t likely to agree that they obscure and impoverish mental causation. Three arguments from Murphy & Brown (2007) illustrate this.[[10]](#endnote-10) (a) Minds are neural functions that involve cognitive information processing. (b) Minds have autonomy, for (in their functionalism) the matter and forces of reductive (mechanistic, bottom-up) neural causes are superseded by the information processing of non-reductive (holistic, top-down) causation. The higher system controls the lower one via these emergent top-down functions (language, reason, etc.). This frees us from bottom-up neural determinism. (c) This NRP allows for free will, for free will is simply being self-determined by our physical brain functions such as reasoning.

But Murphy & Brown’s functionalism ends up obscuring and impoverishing minds. (a) Their functionalist view of the mind’s qualia ignores the intrinsic nature of qualia, as noted above. (b) These authors are also obscure about how abstract functions can cause brains to do anything. The causality of matter and forces is ignored. (c) Their functionalism also ignores the vital role in our self-determination of the qualia in our feelings, values, and ideals. We consult, prioritize, and reconcile these to control our lives. Arguably, this yields novel, qualitative dynamics to our comparisons and choices between qualia, which are thus partly autonomous of external factors (see §5.5 below). In contrast, Murphy and Brown’s supposedly autonomous top-down causes are really just puppets of the sociobiological factors dictating the goals of top-down processing. We’re thus no more autonomous than a nonconscious robot whose basic aims come purely from external programmers. This is the very antithesis of self-determination. Input-output charts of information processing ignore all these qualia. They impoverish and obscure minds—they don’t explain them.

**4.4 Summary**

Standard theories of mind and their origins are quite problematic. RP faces an intelligibility gap between soggy neurons and conscious minds. NRP posits three quite different entities—abstract functions, soggy neurons, and conscious minds—with problematic relations (identity, emergence, supervenience, etc.) that end up neglecting qualia and their causal powers. DAT (and mysticism) are profoundly mysterious in numerous ways. Idealism doesn’t explain why minds and brains are closely connected. Russellian monism doesn’t explain how abstract mathematical accounts of the world can be grounded in conscious entities. Theistic dualism involves obscure causality between nonphysical minds and bodies. But at least this dualism (and some idealist theories) takes the autonomy of mental causality seriously. The other theories don’t. Without compelling reasons, they end up treating minds as puppets of external forces, robbing them of autonomous causality and free will. Their paradoxical claims are based on scarce scientific evidence and problematic metaphysical assumptions—and they’re rebuffed by considerable introspective evidence. They thus fail to explain the mind’s qualia and powers, and instead just diminish and impoverish them.

**5. Refining Theistic Dualism To Avoid All these Problems**

Our AC’s third premise above is that “theistic dualism can be refined to avoid all these problems [above], including its own.” This dualism must especially clear up its own problems of how physical substances can interact with nonphysical, nonspatial mental substances—and how the various traits of minds (their qualia, unity, and subjects) can arise. The main issues concern the interaction and mental unity. We’ll rely here on Lowe’s dualism, in which both a conscious and unconscious substance exist—with both being spatial, but only the former being unified.

If theistic dualism can avoid its problems and all the others above too, this will support AC’s conclusion that theistic dualism—where God creates our minds in his own image with a conscious, unified, rational mind—best explains the mind and its origins. We’ll modify theistic dualism below—but we’ll do so to preserve this core claim and avoid its perennial problems.

**5.1 Lowe’s Dualism**

In the Non-Cartesian Subject Dualism (NCSD) of E. J. Lowe (2010), the subject (person) is a unified, simple substance that is nonmaterial yet exists spatially and interacts with brains. These substances are fundamental, ontologically distinct bearers of properties.

Lowe’s substance dualism is not a dualism of bodies and wholly incorporeal minds—it’s a dualism of persons and their organized bodies. Here, persons are distinct from their organized bodies, yet are the bearers of both mental properties and certain physical properties (in virtue of having bodies with those properties). The mental properties include thought and feeling, while the physical properties include shape, spatial location, and velocity.

Lowe (2006, 2008a, 2008b, 2010) insists that a person is a mental substance that is unified and simple (i.e., lacking separate parts)—unlike the person’s brain, which is composed of myriad dispersed neurons. (Cf. Leibniz’s (1695) view that the mind’s subject is unified, while the body is an aggregate lacking unity.) Lowe (2008b) is clear that NCSD can be “fairly described as an emergentist position” since it treats the causal powers of nonmaterial persons as “complementing and supplementing” the relevant events in their organized bodies (i.e., their brains).

Note above that NCSD differs from Cartesian substance dualism by maintaining that persons possess not only mental properties but also certain physical properties such as spatiality. This suggests how persons can interact with their bodies without Descartes’ causal issues.

In sum, NCSD treats subjects as unified, simple mental substances that are immaterial and have mental properties, including emergent causal powers. Subjects also have physical properties such as spatial location due to their possession of bodies, which are physical substances that lack unity and simplicity. Being spatial, the subject can interact with its body without Descartes’ issues. Simply put, minds are simple, unified, spatial substances that interact with physical substances.

**5.2 Refining Lowe’s Dualism**

Despite its advantage over Descartes’ account of interaction, NCSD raises two issues. First, how can the subject interact with the brain, given that (in Lowe, 2006) the subject’s choices explain bodily behavior not by exerting forces, but by giving reasons for the choices? Second, how can the subject be unified and simple, given that its body is not?

Interestingly, the brain’s electromagnetic (EM) field has just these features of *unified simplicity* and *exerting forces*. So, treating the conscious subject as a neural EM field can avoid the two issues above as follows. First, the subject can exert forces in brains because it’s an *EM force field* interacting with neurons. Second, the subject can be unified and simple because the brain’s EM field is a continuous, unified wave—a *single unified whole*—across the quite separate neurons that generate it. In the brain’s EM field, the subject can serve as a single, unified controlling center whose mutually conscious experiences don’t divide into separate consciousnesses.

What do we mean above in saying the conscious subject is a neural EM field? We experience our thoughts directly, while perceiving EM fields quite indirectly via EEGs, reflected light, and eyes. So, we can’t directly know EM’s underlying reality or substance (the fundamental stuff comprising it) beyond how it appears to our senses. For all we know, this hidden reality could thus be consciousness—consciousness that occupies space and exerts forces. This aligns with how physics describes EM fields simply by their interactions. Physics says nothing about what the fields are in themselves, so it could be consciousness, for all we know. This simplifies Strawson’s (2016) RM. It also avoids RM’s obscure grounding and extrinsic abstract entities.

We call this refined field-based dualism “dualist field theory” (DFT) because it posits both a conscious EM substance (EM charges and fields, including electrons and photons) and a nonconscious substancethat iseverything but EM (such as certain charges and fields in atomic nuclei). Consciousness is the real nature of this EM beyond how it appears to our senses via EEGs, et cetera. It is EM’s real, underlying substance—its concrete, fundamental energy stuff. It occupies space, does work by exerting forces, and is EM’s sole constituent.

Neural EM activity gives the mind all its characteristic traits, including its unity, qualia, intelligent operations, and its interaction with neurons. We’ll explain all this below—but for now, a bit more about its unity is needed. In resting neurons, electrical activities are weak, so their consciousness remains separated. But as brain circuits fire, their EM activity generates a continuous EM wave between neurons that unites (pools) their separate, atomized consciousness. These strong fields are localized right around ion currents that run (as EEGs show) along neuronal circuits. These fields are especially strong among well-aligned cells (such as in cortical modules), and among cells that fire together in a coherent, mutually reinforcing manner. Yet, consciousness isn’t unified where fields are weak inside brains or between brains. Much of the consciousness in brains is thus subliminal. The mind is the hidden reality of the brain’s electrical activity.

It might seem that not only DFT—but also physicalism—could use EM to better explain the mind’s unity. Yet this would require reducing minds to EM fields spread across space—and that faces serious explanatory gaps. DFT avoids reductionism (see below).

In seating our consciousness in neural EM, DFT partly resembles EM-field theories of consciousness. The latter first arose from renowned thinkers like Kohler, Libet, Eccles, and Popper (see Jones, 2013, for references and accounts). They’re now proliferating because they draw on considerable experimental evidence, withstand past criticisms, and help to avoid problems in neuroscience. These fields reach continuously across space and weaken rapidly with distance via Coulomb’s law. They resemble images, for example, in that both arguably arise from discrete, grainy neurons and reach across space in continuous, unified, intangible forms.

In sum, DFT says that *consciousness is the hidden reality of EM (beyond its sensory appearances), which exerts forces continuously across the brain as a unified whole.* All but EM is nonconscious in this dualism. DFT can thus explain what Lowe doesn’t—how subjects get their unified simplicity and forcefulness. For an EM field exerts forces and reaches across the brain as a unified, continuous wave—a single, simple, unified whole—unlike the brain’s separate neurons.

Having looked at how DFT avoids traditional dualism’s problems, we’ll now begin our argument that DFT avoids the problems in all other theories of mind. We’ll start with how it deals with the hard problem of what makes neural activity conscious versus nonconscious. Then, we’ll turn to easy problems concerning the neural correlates of the mind’s qualia. unity, and subject.

**5.3 Avoiding the Hard Problem**

DFT tries to avoid the problems (listed above) that competing theories face in explaining what makes neural activity conscious. It does so with its view that consciousness is the hidden reality of EM beyond its sensory appearances. (See Jones, 2016 for further details on what follows.)

*Reductive physicalism* treats minds as observable neural events in neuroscience. But in DFT, minds are the underlying reality of these events beyond what EEGs show. This explains what reductions don’t—why minds aren’t observable in brains. There’s no explanatory gap here.

*NRP* says that consciousness emerges from brain activity. But in DFT, consciousness is instead a fundamental part of reality (yet overall subjects do emerge innocuously from simpler conscious activities). Nor does DFT treat visual images as abstract information like NRP does. Instead, images are EM substances spread across neural maps in unobservable ways.

*RM* involves abstract mathematical accounts of the world, which DFT avoids. The same applies to RM’s neutral monism, panprotopsychism, and its other highly complex, obscure views.

*Dual-aspect theory* claims that genuine causality occurs only in a deeply mysterious entity underlying the mental and physical worlds. But in DFT, there is no mysterious third entity. Instead, mental activity is simply the hidden reality of neuroelectrical activity.

*Idealism* treats bodies as figments of minds, yet this doesn’t explain why minds depend on brains. In DFT, bodies aren’t figments of minds—minds are the hidden reality of certain bodies.

To summarize, in DFT, unlike in physicalism, the mind isn’t reduced to, or emergent from, observable brain activity—instead it’s the hidden reality of this activity. DFT also avoids DAT’s mysterious third entity, idealism’s problematic mind-brain interaction, and the obscure abstract entities of RM and NRP.

But DFT arguably faces its own problem here. This “combination problem” (Chalmers, 2016) concerns how conscious neurons, molecules, etc. (microexperiences) combine to form our overall percepts, memories, etc. (macroexperiences) and the overall subject that owns them. We’ll argue below that DFT’s EM approach is imminently suited to explaining all mental combinations.

**5.4 Avoiding Easy Problems**

As already noted, neuroscience faces numerous easy problems. It doesn’t explain how different qualia arise, for processing circuits don’t differ enough to explain the stark differences between qualia for vision, taste, et cetera. Nor has it explained how our experiences unite to form larger experiences and the subject who owns them. DFT can help deal with these issues.

DFT draws on fast-growing evidence that different sensory qualia correlate with intense, localized electrical activity in different sensory-detector cells. This electrical activity occurs in the cells’ membranes, i.e., in their unique ion-channel proteins and G-protein-coupled receptors (GPCRs). For example, the three retinal opsins correlate with the three primary colors. These electrically charged proteins are crucial to sensory circuits—they create the nerve impulses in the circuits. In DFT, qualia aren’t encoded by these proteins. Qualia are instead the underlying hidden substance of their electrical activity. This is why qualia aren’t observed in brains. There’s growing evidence that such correlations also hold between emotional qualia and limbic hormonal receptors. There are far too many correlations to cover here (see Jones & Hunt, 2023 for the full lists with citations—and further explanations, such as why neuroplasticity doesn’t threaten this account).[[11]](#endnote-11)

In DFT, EM activity not only creates different qualia, but also unites them to form overall perceptions. EM-charged proteins create the qualia—then their fields unify these qualia to form overall perceptions. This arguably explains what neuroscience hasn’t yet—the binding mechanism that unifies separate circuits for color and shape to form a single unified visual image. A unified EM field reaches along separate visual circuits for color and shape to bind them into a single visual image. This occurs in visual maps such as cortical area V1. Color and shape cells in V1 don’t systematically connect synaptically, but their fields are ideally suited for uniting the cells’ electrical activities. Fields in V1 modules are quite strong, for cells here are well aligned. Also, color and shape cells are adjacent in V1, so their diffuse currents and local fields are close by. Pictorial images thus arise from neural maps, including the pictorial arrays of retinal and place cells. This explains what neuroscience hasn’t: the qualia, unity, and pictorial form of images.

EM also helps explain the unified subject. This unified controlling center emerges from simple, highly electrified mental structures involved in perception, emotion, memory, and thought. (Again, subjects emerge in DFT, but consciousness doesn’t.) The subject is all these electrical circuitries working together to coordinate cognition and creatively solve problems. The subject is their conscious EM energy. As already noted, there’s no single, unified cortical structure where all conscious pathways converge. The best candidate for the subject is instead the brain’s single, unified EM field. This neuroelectrical account of the subject (Jones, in press) fits well with growing evidence that oscillating EM fields help guide and unify conscious cognition (Hunt & Jones, 2023). This top-down causality is EM energy, not Murphy & Brown’s abstract functions.

Evidence that all this unified cognition involves EM takes four forms. First, no other mechanisms adequately explain the mind’s unity. Second, Koch et al. (2016) argue that locally activated EEGs actually track conscious perceptions across brains better than other events, such as neural synchrony or P300 events. This EEG evidence correlates unified perceptions with local neuroelectrical fields, which aligns with DFT. Third, EM fields alone—not any particles or synapses—propagate signals across slices in hippocampal tissue (Chiang et al., 2019). This indicates that it is actually the fields that unify this activity. Fourth, as just noted, there’s growing evidence that oscillating fields enable our attention to control cognition. This indicates that conscious subjects exert forces in the form of EM fields in a unified way all across the brain.

All this helps DFT deal with its combination problem (§5.3) of how microexperiences in quarks, etc. combine to form macroexperiences such as images, emotions, or subjects. DFT uses EM above to show how molecular-level microexperiences combine into larger forms such as images and subjects. The combination problem has two sub-issues that DFT also addresses. (a) James (1890) doubted that unity via combination is possible, for all things are aggregates with no inherent unity (i.e., such unity is just a theoretical functionalist construct). But this doesn’t threaten DFT, for the conscious EM field that it posits doesn’t exist as an aggregate, but as a continuous wave—a single, simple, unified whole—across quite separate neurons. (b) Another challenge to combination is Chalmers’ (2016) view that the subject arises from combining simple micro*subjects* which have micro*experiences*. Yet this controversial claim leads combination into a metaphysical quagmire. In contrast, DFT shows above that the subject can arise straightforwardly without any need whatsoever for controversial microsubjects (whether or not they exist).

In these ways, DFT’s EM approach may help make our minds’ conscious creative powers seem less miraculous. This may also apply to God’s conscious creative powers. If the hidden reality of EM is consciousness, and if the EM force was originally one with all other forces, then God could have been the hidden reality of this unified force, and the big bang could have been a conscious act of creation. This conscious creativity would have continued in our universe after the big bang via the EM force, thus producing chemistries, organisms, and ultimately minds.

To summarize, in DFT, conscious EM forges our various qualia, unites our various experiences, and erects a unified, creative subject. This occurs without combination problems. DFT might even help theistic dualism explain not only the mind’s creative powers but also God’s.

**5.5 Avoiding Free Will Problems**

Competitors to theistic dualism fail to fully explain the mind’s traits and powers, partly because they diminish the roles of mental causation and free will by treating minds as puppets of external forces. On the other hand, while traditional theistic dualism takes mental autonomy and free will seriously, its account of mind-brain interactions is problematic.

DFT refines this dualism to avoid its obscure interactionism by treating minds as spatial. DFT avoids treating minds as puppets by not reducing mental causes to neural causes. While this involves top-down cortico-thalamic activity, its underlying conscious activity involves *directly comparing and thinking about feelings and ideas*. As argued in §4.4 (against epiphenomenalism), this brings novel, qualitative dynamics to our thought as we *consult, prioritize, and reconcile our feelings and ideas* in efforts to control our lives. Here, we *weigh feelings and explore ideas* in ways that transcend the principles of neural networks. We construct our own autonomous goals in the form of ideals and values imbued with feelings. In this way, the self draws its self-controlling power from the primal emotional powers it controls—like power steering (Lorenz, 1966).[[12]](#endnote-12)

In DFT’s theistic dualism, we ultimately get our conscious, creative minds from our creator God (via the evolution of chemistries and biologies). We’re self-determined, but this free will is just partial, for while we’re clever and creative, we have limited foresight and wisdom.

Neither wholly rational nor wholly animal, we roam between the sure-footed worlds of the beastly and divine. We wander as lost souls through the uniquely human world of bewildering possibilities, warring ideas, and daunting choices.

Faced with this perilous predicament, where can we turn for salvation? Science can sort out empirical facts about our world. But it can’t peer into our minds and show us how to weigh, adjudicate, and reconcile the private feelings and aspirations at the center of our being. Science can’t access what’s of real worth in our lives—these feelings that give us our ultimate purposes.

We argued above that, to fully understand ourselves and our universe, we must go beyond science to a deeper realization that our minds and our feelings reflect a larger spiritual presence in the universe—hidden from our sense organs and science. We initially considered two problems— how the physical world arose in outer space, and how it arose alongside the conscious inner world. Our solution to both issues lies in how the larger spirit creates our minds and our world. Arguably, we arise from, and even aspire to, the spiritual. It is our source and perhaps our salvation.

**6. Summary and Conclusions**

Physicalists such as Churchland and Murphy claim that science better explains minds and their subjects than traditional dualism and theism, in which our God-given nonspatial minds interact mysteriously with brains. We try to turn the tables here by arguing that physicalism is too flawed to explain minds and their ultimate source. For example, it’s deeply obscure about how minds can be reduced to, emergent from, or realized in soggy brains or abstract information processing. By contrast, theistic dualism can argue that God’s mind is a more credible source of our minds. For both kinds of mind are conscious, unified, rational beings. So, our source is probably God, not anything physical. This is an argument from consciousness to the existence of God (AC).

But AC has issues. In addition to physicalism and theistic dualism, various theories explain the mind’s origin. Also, all are problematic. We thus modified AC to read as follows: (1) Physicalism, theistic dualism, and other theories yield explanations for how consciousness ultimately arises. (2) All these theories have problems. (3) But theistic dualism can be refined to avoid all these problems, including its own. (4) So, it’s probably the best explanation.

Premise (3) does most of the work. It shows as follows how (a) theistic dualism can be refined to avoid its issues, and (b) this refined dualism avoids the problems in all other theories.

(a) We refine theistic dualism’s problematic interaction of nonspatial minds with bodies by drawing on Lowe’s dualism, where the subject is spatial. He also treats the subject as a unified, simple entity, unlike the body, which is an aggregate with separate parts. This maintains the affinity between God and other subjects. But Lowe didn’t explain how the mind gets this simple, unified nature—nor its forceful nature, which allows it to interact with, and affect, brains.

To address both of Lowe’s shortcomings, we treat our consciousness as the hidden reality of our neuroelectrical activity beyond its sensory appearances. We perceive this activity quite indirectly via EEGs, reflected light, and eyes. So, we can’t directly know its underlying reality beyond how it appears to our senses. This hidden reality could thus be consciousness. It would occupy space and exert forces. Consciousness can thus form a continuous, unified electromagnetic (EM) wave across the brain that interacts with the brain. This mind is simple, for it lacks separate parts, unlike the brain’s quite separate neurons. In this dualism, all but EM is nonconscious.

(b) This refined dualism avoids the problems in other theories. As the hidden reality of brain activity, the consciousness isn’t reduced to, or emergent from, brain activity, as physicalism says. Our dualism also clearly avoids dual-aspect theory’s mysterious third entity, and the obscure abstract entities of Russellian monism and nonreductive physicalism. It also avoids idealism’s claim that bodies are mere figments of minds that (in turn) mysteriously depend on brains. For bodies aren’t figments in our dualism. Our dualism also avoids treating minds as puppets of external forces, like these other theories usually do. For minds have their own qualia-dependent dynamics irreducible to neural causality.

Our conclusion is that theistic dualism is “probably the best explanation” of the mind’s origin, for it avoids the issues in all theories, including its own traditional form. But we modify the latter to avoid its issues and thus preserve its core claim that God makes us in his own image.

This AC may help reveal the poverty of scientism’s blind worship of natural science. Dawkins (2006) said, “I don’t understand why so many people who are sophisticated in science go on believing in God.[[13]](#endnote-13) Even Murphy’s eloquent Christian physicalism may reflect some scientism. In treating minds as purely physical entities, she arguably abets claims that physical science gives knowledge while religion just offers subjective faith and morals. We’ve argued that physicalism obscures and impoverishes minds. It especially fails to explain their qualia and causal powers. It opens the door to attitudes such as “my genes made me do it”—and to recommendations that we go “beyond freedom and dignity.” It dissolves the individual’s liberty and responsibility.

There’s little dbt of t power of P science in expl inanimate behavr, bt scientism is inabil to see limitns of P scienc in expl M.

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Complexity, Entropy, and the Physics of Information. Addison-Wesley.

1. This is so-called “qualitative” or “phenomenal” consciousness. More limited terms that focus narrowly on attention and thought are “access consciousness,” which is the availability of information for acting, speaking, and reasoning—and “self-consciousness,” which is self-awareness of one’s own thought and individuality. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. William Craig argues that God’s must exist because our intentional states (which are about objects) couldn’t exist without God. [https://www.reasonablefaith.org/writings/popular-writings/existence-nature-of-god/does-god-exist1] We don’t include this in our list because not all conscious states are about objects. For example, when we stare blankly in fatigue trances, our consciousness isn’t actually about anything, for all thoughts and attitudes are turned off. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. https://estudantedavedanta.net/Brahma%20Sutras%20-%20According%20to%20Sri%20Sankara%20by%20Swami%20Vireswarananda%20%5BSanskrit-English%5D.pdf [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Haugeland’s point also counters Wheeler’s (1990) call to wholly assimilate physical science to information science. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Physicalists could avoid abstractions by reductively identifying pains with certain types of concrete neural events—so-called “type” identity. Or they could nonreductively identify pains with some physical event or another, whether neural or nonneural—this “token” identity involves multiple realization. But both face Leibniz’s intelligibility gap. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Some arguments for God’s existence refer to abstract objects, but their existence outside minds is highly debatable. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Churchland sticks to close physicalism’s implicit atheism, while Murphy diverges from it to say that God created humans as physical beings with morality, but without immortal souls. Both feel that physicalism has been well confirmed by the responses of mental activity to neural activations and impairments. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Wegner (2002) argues that conscious will is an illusion, our actions are caused by nonconscious neural mechanisms. He gives two kinds of evidence. (a) Libet’s found that readiness potentials precede our conscious urges to move our finger. But Mele (2006) counters here that readiness potentials may merely mark the start of forming an intention to act. (b) Conscious willing often goes astray, as when we misremember events. But Holton (2004) counters that even if consciously trying to remember can result in mistakes, it can still be the cause of those (mistaken) memories. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. <https://news.yale.edu/2009/06/15/brain-energy-use-key-understanding-consciousness-yale-researchers-find> [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. We focus on Murphy and Brown’s claim that NRP is compatible with free will because it aligns with Christian physicalism. Earlier compatibilist-NRP accounts rely on dubious views, such as anomalous monism and determinable-determinate distinctions. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. These emotional and sensory qualia don’t emerge from EM activity but are fundamental. They are the rest energies (mc2) of the electrically charged proteins. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. DFT’s self-determinism arguably implies that we’re locked into what we do and can’t be held responsible for doing otherwise. This is avoided by allowing a degree of quantum indeterminism in top-down causation (cf. Kane, 1966). [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. <https://www.pbs.org/faithandreason/transcript/dawk-body.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-13)