**Objections to Dualism**

In his excellent recent defense of Hylomorphism, James D. Madden discusses a number of theoretical objections to Substance Dualism.[[1]](#footnote-1) While he concedes that none of these objections are “deal-breakers,” he does contend that these objections make Substance Dualism an unattractive theory in relation to Hylomorphism. In this paper, I want to make the best reply I can on behalf of at least one kind of substance dualism, albeit one that makes some significant concessions to the Hylomorphist position. First, I will briefly sketch the Dualist position that I propose to defend, Next, I will consider the classic objections to Substance Dualism in relation to the position that I have outlined, concluding that these objections are much less formidable than they are usually taken to be.[[2]](#footnote-2) I will conclude that, while the Substance Dualist position I have sketched here is not perfect, it bids fair to be closer to the correct view about the relation between mind and body than any of its rivals and so deserves to be affirmed in preference to them, despite its as yet unresolved difficulties and problems.

**What is Substance Dualism?**

There are many versions of Substance Dualism, both ancient and modern, so it is appropriate to begin with a brief sketch of the dualist view that I intend to make a case for, without talking too much space contrasting it with related views. On the view that I am defending here, a human being is a *living organism*, a compound substance consisting of two substances, soul and body, each of which possesses its own distinct and contrary nature and its own act of existence. At the same time, each is by nature naturally dependent on the other for the exercise of its characteristic operation, so that the two form a single mutually interdependent complex of operations. Considered in itself, the body of an organism is a material thing like any other material thing: it is a compound substance consisting of many parts, both proper and constitutive, that can be scientifically analyzed on several levels: organic, biochemical, chemical, and physical. *Qua* material thing, the substantial form of the body or *forma corporeitatis*, encoded in its DNA, is both educed from its physical microstructure and strongly supervenient on it. At the same time, this substantial form dictates the standard pattern of organic development and endows that body with all of its qualitative attributes, including its dispositional ones, such as its causal powers and liabilities for change. Nevertheless, the body *qua* material thing possesses no properties different in kind from any other material thing; to this extent, it is a “machine,” though as we shall see a “machine” is not exactly what we have typically taken it to be.

By contrast, the soul is a simple, immaterial sempiternal substance existing without a natural material component. It inherently possesses a single, undifferentiated act of *per se* causation by means of which it serves as the substantial form of the body, not *qua* material thing, but rather *qua* living organism, through being the proximate *per se* cause of its continuous operation as a living thing. The soul is thus the principle of the life of the body, exercising an act that, in relation to itself, shrinks to a single, dimensionless point but which in relation to the body *qua* material thing whose operations it sustains, is temporally and spatially extended as that action terminates in the spatially and temporally extended body that is the object of that act and through which that act achieves its effect of sustaining its operations.

Consciousness arises at the interface between soul and body, constituted by space and time as forms of intuition constituting an intentional field of awareness in which various contents - sensations, feelings, passions, emotions, mental images, concepts, thoughts, judgments, beliefs, inferences and so on, arise in various ways from various sources and are immediately apprehended by the self. Just as the body is alive through the power of the soul to sustain its operations as a living organism, so too is the soul conscious through its association with the body, although consciousness belongs to the soul and is in no way a bodily act of any kind. A soul that has become conscious is a mind. As mind, the soul acquires a number of additional powers by means of which the immaterial contents of consciousness come to be present in its intentional field of awareness. While those contents are immediately apprehended us and capable of being introspected, the acts and processes by means of which the mind produces those contents are not and can only be the subject of transcendental analysis and investigation. A mind that possesses self-conscious rational agency (and not all minds do) is a *self* and, in addition to its mental contents also apprehends itself as an ongoing subject of awareness, not as one content among others (as Hume assumes would have to be the case) but rather as that which apprehends those contents. A soul that is *by nature* a self-conscious rational subject (or *rational soul*) is *eo ipso* an individual substance of a rational nature, or *person*. So too, then, will be the organism (for example, a *human being*) of which such a soul is the substantial form, and this status will attach to both that soul and the organism whose substantial form it is regardless of whether that person is, or is even physically capable of, being an actual conscious subject so long as the soul and the body are still joined.

I have discussed the details of this account in other places.[[3]](#footnote-3) This sketch will have to suffice for the present as well as the many questions that it doubt brings to the reader’s mind. Let us instead turn to the standard objections to dualism and see how it fares in relation to them.

**The Interaction Problem**

The most commonly heard objection to Substance Dualism is the interaction problem, first raised by Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia in her correspondence with Descartes.[[4]](#footnote-4) Dualism says that the soul and the body are substances of contrary natures yet that they somehow causally influence each other. *Prima facie*, it is difficult to understand how an immaterial, sempiternal substance like a soul could in any way exert efficient causal influence in the spatio-temporal physical world. In the same way, it seems equally mysterious that any purely material body could exercise any sort of causal influence over an immaterial substance like a soul. In response to Elizabeth, Descartes frankly owns that this is a mystery, but one that we must accept and live with given that the natural light of reason informs us in no uncertain terms that we are both minds and have bodies. Despite what others may think he should have said, I think that this response by Descartes is well taken.

Substance Dualism is arguably the default position on the mind/body problem; it is the most natural view to take on the grounds of everyday experience.[[5]](#footnote-5) Monistic views, whether Idealist or Materialist, require us to regard our experience as systematically misleading, though this is easier for the Idealist to make out than the Materialist. Now, of course, if some other theory about the relation between mind and body were able to successfully explain that relation, it might be preferable to Substance Dualism. In fact, however, every theory about the mind has its own analogue of the interaction problem that crops up precisely at the point where the precise relation between the mind and the body has to be explained. Idealists deny the existence of the body, whereas Eliminative Materialists deny the existence of consciousness *as experienced*; neither of these views is plausible given the fact of that experience and what we experience when we advert to it; indeed the latter is simply obviously false in relation to lived experience. Reductive materialists and identity theorists have no way to explain how consciousness as we experience it could be *nothing but* some purely physical process going on in the brain when these two things are so obviously different from one another. Panpsychists, Emergentists, and Constitutionalists have the difficulty of analyzing the relevant relations in such a way as to make them both clear and relevant to the explaining the relation between mind and body. Property Dualists, Double Aspect theorists, and Neutral Monists have the difficulty of explaining what this thing that is neither mind nor body but somehow both mind and body and neither mind nor body exclusively is supposed to be...and so on. Even if the Interaction Problem is a problem for dualism, there is a cognate problem for every other theory that has been tried so far - the mystery of mind, which in the case of dualism is articulated as the Interaction Problem, remains unsolved and is thus provides no reason for us to abandon Substance Dualism in favor of some other theory. Dualism remains the *prima facie* best explanation of the relation between mind and body on the basis of our common, everyday experience. As such, the presumption in favor of that view is not yet overcome and Descartes’ refusal to be baited on that score vindicated.

However, the defense of dualism need not depend solely on this merely negative argument. I honestly believe that the Interaction can be solved, though not perhaps in the way that it was put to Descartes, either in the context of his own theoretical commitments or those likely to be taken for granted by those opposed to dualism on extra-philosophical grounds. At any rate, the idea that there is something *incoherent* about Dualism can, I think, be laid to rest by in a fairly straightforward way on the view I have sketched above. Let me discuss mind/body interaction from both aspects: mind to body and body to mind. Let us begin with the relation of body to mind.

**How the Body Influences the Mind** Descartes and Princess Elizabeth’s common commitment to Galilean physicalism made the problem of body/mind interaction insoluble for them. In particular, their rejection of substantial forms, non-physical structural features of external bodies existing as global emergent properties of those bodies, which while strongly supervenient on their physical microstructure serve as the ontological principle of all of that body’s qualitative and dispositional attributes, leads to the problem of the external world and, ultimately, to Humean skepticism. The first step on the way to a solution to the mind/body problem is the rejection of Galilean physicalism and the acceptance of a neo-Aristotelian ontology of material things, for which the thing’s physical microstructure constitutes merely the matter of that material thing, not its entire reality. Material things are compound substances consisting of matter and form and for which form is the principle of intelligibility existing in that thing as its nature - its individualized, concrete essence.

Matter, understood as the modern scientific tradition understands it, is never present to us as something experienced by us - it is a theoretical entity, something posited to explain something else of which we are immediately aware in experience. As such, matter is only indirectly intelligible to us and cannot even be conceived of by us unless there is something else of which we are directly or immediately aware. Since matter cannot be present to us in consciousness as such, it is necessary that there be something else that conveys the nature and reality of the external world to us in order for us to even so much as conceive, let alone posit the existence of matter as modern science conceives it. However, if Galilean physicalism is true, there is nothing external to consciousness except matter in motion. Galileo, Descartes, and Locke suppose that causal interaction between our bodies and external things, all of which are constructed from simple material substances, somehow gives rise to sensation and perceptual experience in consciousness, but the difficulties in spelling this out simply reflect another aspect of the mind/body problem and ultimately undermine the New Science of matter in motion itself.

On the ontology of material things, however, it is possible for external objects to be present in and to consciousness by means of their substantial forms which being non-physical are potentially contents of conscious awareness. On the traditional account, numerically one and the same substantial form can simultaneously exist in an external object as its nature or concrete essence and also in a different way (“formally and intentionally”) in the mind as an intelligible species or concept. The story of how the substantial form of a material thing comes to be present in the mind as an intelligible species is one I have told elsewhere.[[6]](#footnote-6) In this context, I just want to consider a couple of aspects of this account.

First, while the term “species” as used in the Scholastic (and for that matter the neo-Scholastic) tradition is somewhat vague, to call a substantial form a species is to say that it exists in some medium of transmission (a wave-packet, a state of a sensory organ, a brain state, etc.) without becoming the nature of that medium which it informs. Instead, the medium simply possesses that substantial form as an extraneous structural feature. Although it is the qualitative forms (which are merely perceptible surface properties of the material things that we experience in sense-perception) that are actually received in the act of sensory stimulation the brain, which has evolved to subserve conscious awareness, its needs and ends, acts as a kind of “common sense” which organizes all of this disparate inFORMation in such a way that its substantial form is present in consciousness, first as the principle of structural unity in the phantasm (roughly, “mental image”) and then in the intellect as a concept, indifferently applicable to many particulars. This concept existing in the mind as a universal, when imposed on a mental image or phantasm makes that collection of sense-data a *representation* of an extramental particular, from which the physical microstructure of that material thing can be theoretically reconstructed by natural science. In this way, genuine knowledge of external, material things becomes possible and, on its basis, the sort of theoretical inquiry that natural science engages in. Thus, both knowledge of the external world and scientific realism find a genuine basis and prospect in this theory, one denied to a Galilean physicalist picture of things.

**How the Mind Influences the Body** One of the most pervasive features of our ordinary everyday experience is the fact of *agency* and its efficacy in producing change in the world by means of bodily activity. To use the hackneyed example yet again: I will that my arm should rise and subsequently observe that it does. The most natural description of this situation is that my act of will, a mental event occurring in consciousness, caused the rising of my arm, an act of my body, a material thing in the external, physical world. Yet how can we make sense of this otherwise unshakeable conviction? The most natural supposition, the only one apparently conceivable to Descartes and Princess Elizabeth, and for that manner many people today, is that in order to direct the body, the mind must somehow enter the order of horizontal efficient causes, as occurs in the case of body-body interaction. As such, the soul must somehow generate and insert some sort of *influxus physicus* into the physical world, either in the form of physical energy or exert some sort of influence that moves physical energy around in the brain in order to guide and control bodily behavior. However, on the model of mind and brain/body interaction I have offered elsewhere,[[7]](#footnote-7) since the soul acts as the *per se* cause of the body’s operation rather than as an efficient cause, it need not enter the order of efficient causes in order to influence the course of events in the physical world. Instead, since the soul’s act of sustaining the body’s operations is a necessary condition for the occurrence of those operations, the soul can simply withhold its sustaining act from those proposed actions that it does not choose to acquiesce in, thus removing one of the necessary conditions for them to proceed into full realization or enactment. Since that sustaining act is present to me in consciousness as the general awareness or apprehension that accompanies all mental contents of whatever sort I can exert immediate, voluntary control over those contents by *concentration of attention*, i.e. by simply disattending from those proposals for action (realized in the brain and central nervous system as physical *action-patterns*) that I elect not to enact. Of course, this supposes that the physical body/brain is not a closed system that altogether excludes the possibility of vertical non-physical causal influence. To see whether this is true requires that we now turn to some further objections to Substance Dualism.

**Causal Closure and the Conservation Principles**

A second objection often urged against Substance Dualism is that it is unscientific for some reason and cannot be accommodated to the known facts of neurophysiology. In particular, dualism is taken to violate a thesis known as the Causal Closure Principle. This principle is typically stated as a well-known or unassailable dogma of modern science, sufficient by itself to exclude Substance Dualism. However, this “Principle” is vague and difficult to interpret in such a way as to be both true and empirically significant. On the one hand, it is sometimes treated as a methodological principle that bids us seek physical causes for physical events. Methodological principles, however, are merely prescriptions guiding theoretical inquiry and do not provide an *a priori* guarantee of their universal applicability. Such a principle is either open to the possibility that there may be non-physical causes for some physical events or it simply expresses a general, dogmatic refusal to entertain any but physical explanations for physical events, regardless of what the empirical evidence of lived experience indicates. This principle, then, is not strong enough by itself to exclude Substance Dualism from serious consideration.

A more substantive version of the principle claims that physical processes are “gapless,” i.e. are spatio-temporally continuous and (*qua* physical) contain no breaks between the physically necessary and sufficient conditions for the production of any physical effect that require us to postulate any other causes to explain how the behavior of organisms are elicited. In particular, it is claimed that human neurophysiology is “gapless,” which seems to exclude either the need or the possibility that there is some sort of role for something called the soul or mind to contribute to production of human action, such as introducing energy into the brain or moving the energy in the brain around. However, the sort of influence that I have supposed that the soul or mind exercises over the brain does not depend on there being any such gaps at the level of horizontal, efficient causation in order to affect human action. Instead, the mind, through concentration of attention, acquiesces in the full realization of some action-patterns in the brain and withholds its acquiescence from others, which therefore fail to reach fruition. No matter what I choose, the result will be something that, when viewed from the third-person point of view available to the neurophysiologist, will look as though it were completely self-explanatory on the horizontal level of efficient causation. As such, this “gaplessness” is not sufficient to show that the physical order is somehow closed to the influence of immaterial substances like the soul or mind.

Nor does the notion of causal necessity justify the belief that, so far as the production of human behavior is concerned, the physical universe is closed to any non-physical causes or influences. As I have argued elsewhere, Hume’s critique of the notion of causality and causal necessity as understood according to the Philosophy of Nature associated with the New Science ought to be accepted as sound, so that in principle there can be no empirical evidence for the existence of such causes or of such necessary connections in nature. However, I have proposed a different account of causality according to which causal necessity is conditional and all physical processes in principle interruptible, so that even if all of the physically necessary and sufficient conditions for the production of some effect, B at T+n are actual and operating at T, that guarantees that B will actually arise or occur only if nothing intervenes to prevent that effect from arising or occurring by interfering with the currently operating process that would, if not interfered with, would naturally give rise to B.[[8]](#footnote-8) The operation of the soul or mind would thus be one factor capable of interfering with any such process occurring in the brain that achieves its end through consciousness, in the way that intentional actions do. On this view, there is no fatalistic necessary operating anywhere in nature, only natural processes with natural outcomes that nevertheless can be prevented from being actualized through outside interference.

The same holds of the conservation laws, which are sometimes held up as a scientific barrier to the possibility of non-physical influence in the production of human intentional action. On my view these laws, like all natural laws, are only conditionally necessary. Further, if dualism is true, then the mind and brain operate together as a single system in the production of human action, and thus the brain considered in itself is not a closed system after all insofar as the production of intentional action is concerned, even if it appears to be physically closed when looked at from the external point of view taken by the neurophysiologist. While the amount of energy in the brain and the angular momentum of its parts remain constant, since according to dualism there is more to the production of intentional action than what happens in the brain as such, these principles in no way rule out the possibility of a non-physical influence in the production of human action.[[9]](#footnote-9)

**The Apparent Dependence of Consciousness on the Brain**

Another common claim made by anti-dualists is that both the existence and the character of consciousness appears to be dependent on the brain in serious and important ways that seem contrary to what we would expect to be the case if consciousness were a purely non-physical affair. Many well-known facts and a mountain of anecdotal evidence attest to the fact that damage or injury to the brain can lead to the cessation of consciousness as well as affecting all of its functions, including perception and rationality. To many, this strongly suggests that consciousness, as such, must be completely dependent on the brain and so strongly supervenient on its operation. From here, it seems just a short hop, skip, and jump to some version of epiphenomenalist materialism.

As I said earlier, the soul is a simple, immaterial, sempiternal substance exercising a single, simple, and undifferentiated activity, by means of which it serves as the vertical, *per se* cause of the operation of the body qua living organism. Apart from the body, this activity conceived of as intrinsic to the soul itself shrinks to a single dimensionless point experientially constituted for a self-conscious rational subject as a sempiternal *duree*. As such, the soul is not capable of any contentful conscious experience apart from the body in relation to which it exercises its characteristic operation. Again, the intentional field of consciousness, characterized by 3D space and A-theory time in which a stream of conscious contents arises at the *interface* between body and soul and constitutes that soul as a mind, a conscious subject. Consciousness thus depends both on the body and the soul for its existence. Without the soul, the body is not alive and contentful consciousness cannot even arise since the non-physical intentional field of awareness, which properly belongs to the immaterial soul, cannot exist. In the same way, the body *qua* living organism is the source of our mental contents, either directly through the soul’s presence to the body as the terminus of its characteristic activity as the vertical, *per se* cause of that operation or indirectly through the species conveyed from external objects to the brain where the agent intellect extracts them and conveys them to the mind. When the body *qua* material thing ceases to function, this spells the death of the body *qua* living organism as well, since the soul in that case is no longer capable of exercising its characteristic operation in relation to the body. At this point, the soul becomes separated from the body and ceases to exercise its characteristic activity as *per se* sustaining cause in relation to it. For the same reason, it ceases to possess an intentional field of awareness and a contentful stream of consciousness, at which point conscious experience ceases. Not even the *duree* that serves as the mark of its presence in and to consciousness remains.

I think it is much more plausible to suppose that the brain evolves to serve the needs of consciousness, which are focused not merely on reproductive success but simply on the enjoyment of further experience and new varieties of conscious awareness than to suppose that the process of brain development is purely organic and the growth of consciousness merely an accidental, fortuitous consequence of a process in which it plays no part. In that case, when the brain and the sensory organs are operating properly, they successfully convey us to the ends to which consciousness directs us. However, the body *qua* material thing is a highly complex “machine” with many moving parts and a finite window of operation, so that many things can go wrong. In some cases, the dependence of the mind on the proper working of its “machinery” can lead to a loss of functioning, robbing the mind of both the raw materials and the operative capacities necessary for rational thought or for a proper human “superego” to control its appetites and emotions. None of this is, or should be, unexpected on the basis of the dualism I have sketched here.

**Animal Minds**

For Descartes, the body *qua* material thing is a self-operating machine that neither admits nor needs the soul as the sustaining cause of its operation. Instead, “animal spirits” in the blood are or contain the “life-force” that distinguishes living from non-living bodies. Even so, purely mechanical explanations are possible for all bodily behavior considered as such. For this reason, Descartes dispenses with animal souls, on the ground that they are explanatorily superfluous. Everything that animals do, according to Descartes, can be explained on mechanical principles in the same way as the movements made by *automata*, machines made by human beings that partially imitate the behaviors of persons and animals. For this reason, Descartes notoriously denied that animals are conscious or feel pain, a thesis in which he was followed by Malebranche and his school, such as the English Malebranchian, John Norris of Bemerton.[[10]](#footnote-10) Norris’s defense of this Cartesian thesis is by far the most challenging presentation of the difficulties involved in the imputation of immaterial souls to beasts. I frankly own that I have no ready response to it.

At the same time, since I find it inconceivable both that animals altogether lack consciousness and that a body could be conscious without the presence of a soul, I have no choice but to affirm that animals possess immaterial souls. These souls are limited in their powers relative to human souls if for no other reason than that the brains of animals are less complex. Animal consciousness is limited to sensation, appetition, and primitive fear and anger. Further, these limited conscious reactions are both triggered by and trigger innate, instinctive patterns of behavior that animals enact in a more or less automatic manner. Non-human animals altogether lack abstract concepts. Because of this, they are incapable of thought, language, judgment, reasoning, knowledge, or rational belief. For the same reason, they altogether lack self-consciousness and personhood. Although they exist as temporally continuous conscious subjects through time they lack any awareness of this fact, so cannot either dwell on the past or anticipate the future. Their natural capacity to learn is also extremely limited. This is not surprising, since learning is of little use to non-human animals because, lacking language or any other medium of transmission they cannot preserve or pass down whatever they may have learned from their limited experience to others of their kind. There is thus no evolutionary “payoff” to animal learning and so no selective pressure for developing it. Animal learning manufactured in the lab through various forms of conditioning engendered in an artificial environment is strongly redolent of the “Clever Hans” phenomenon. Anecdotal reports of amazing animal feats of memory, judgment, and so on are just that, occasional and generally unrepeatable incidents that are merely aberrant rather than indications of significant “hidden assets” inherent in animal “intelligence” and just waiting to be liberated and expressed by a human researcher who has found the magic key needed to access them.

This is not to deny that animals exhibit remarkable, if limited, abilities to navigate through the world, respond to environmental challenges and to simulate complex social and even engineering behavior as result of mere evolutionary conditioning, such as those exhibited by spiders and bees. The point is simply that these feats are neither the product of intelligence or evidence of it. Animals do not *think*. As such, we have to understand their apparently intelligent behavior on the basis of other principles than those that would be used to interpret the behavior of a self-conscious rational agent like a human being. Human beings can learn from and appreciate the beauty, efficiency, and complexity of a beehive or a spider’s web; bees and spiders do not and cannot since their behaviors and the complex structures they build are purely the result of instinct produced by natural selection.

As Descartes and Malebranche point out, our natural tendency toward anthropomorphism makes it almost impossible for us not to suppose that dogs have beliefs (“Master is home”), know things, reason, and both recognize and have affection for their owners of a sort analogous (and in the eyes of many, superior) to that of which rational beings are capable in relation to each other. For the same reason, it is very difficult for us not to be misled by anecdotal evidence into supposing that non-human animals have much more interesting and complex inner lives than they actually do, rather than one that simply subserves the stereotypical, limited stock of standard life-tasks that one sees endlessly repeated in nature documentaries on PBS and *Animal Planet*.

In the same vein, even though animals almost certainly feel and react to pain, as I have argued elsewhere it is doubtful whether animals can *suffer* if this means anything like what it does in the case of a rational human being.[[11]](#footnote-11) Non-human animals are not persons or selves, and have no capacity for living outside the present moment. As such, they lack the necessary conditions for suffering; in their case, then, pain serves a merely epistemic function that is largely beneficial to them.[[12]](#footnote-12)

Even despite the differences between human and non-human animals in terms of the character and quality of their mental lives, I think we must credit non-human animals with immaterial souls for two reasons. First, animals are *living organisms*, not just machines or automata, and thus not reducible simply to bodies *qua* material things. Modern medical science no longer recognizes any quasi-physical *tertium quid*, like animal spirits, *elan vital*, or *chi* existing in the body as a “life-force” that distinguishes living bodies from inanimate things. If we are to make this intuitively obvious distinction, we shall have to make reference to something non-physical - the soul - in order to do so. Secondly, animals are conscious subjects, albeit in a way very different from the way in which we are. Since, as I have suggested elsewhere, sensation cannot be understood as a merely bodily act, only a being with an immaterial soul could be conscious in even in minimal way.[[13]](#footnote-13) I can thus see no alternative to conceding that any plausible form of Substance Dualism must attribute immaterial souls to non-human animals, despite the apparently unanswerable questions and inconveniences that this admission seems to entail: e.g., Why so many souls? How are they individuated? Are animal souls immortal? If so, where do they go when animals die? Do plants have souls as well? And so on. Even in the worst case, however, the price does not seem to me to be too high to pay. Perhaps all dogs *do* go to Heaven. Who knows?

**The Resurrection of the Body**

Classical Platonic Dualism, which sees embodiment as a punishment, dependence on the senses a limitation of the soul’s powers, and the liberation of the soul from the body as the return of the soul to its natural home, explicitly denies both the necessity and desirability of the the bodily resurrection. Christianity, however, teaches in no uncertain terms that there will be a general resurrection of the dead prior to the last judgment. The imagery used in the Christian Scriptures and the Hebrew Bible leave little room to doubt that this involves a literal rising from the dead and the reunification of the soul with the body. Heaven is not just the soul’s return to God; the body, albeit a glorified one, must come along as well.

According to Platonic dualism, the soul is a complete substance in the sense that it depends on the body neither for its existence nor for its characteristic operation, which is purely intellectual and contemplative. Indeed, according to Plato, association with the body simply hampers the soul’s operation and death is positive liberation of the soul from the limitations imposed by sensuous embodiment. Heaven is thus conceived of as a place of spiritual communion without bodies of any kind. The sort of dualism defended here, however, does not go this far, claiming that the soul is independent in existence but not operation from the body, so that the soul *by nature* has no scope for its characteristic operation apart from its unity with the body - only special divine intervention can bring it about that the soul continues to have contentful conscious experience in the disembodied state. Thus, on the dualist view presented here, the bodily resurrection is not superfluous. Indeed, in accordance with what Aquinas teaches, unless some divine creative act intervenes to maintain my contentful consciousness after the death of the body, the death of my body is also *my* death. This is not because I am a body but rather because without the body the soul cannot naturally have any contentful consciousness, and I cannot exist *qua* self-conscious rational agent unless my soul is conscious in this way. The immortality of the soul, then, is not sufficient by itself for the survival of the conscious self after death.

Does the soul continue to have contentful consciousness after death? Many contemporary Christian philosophers, both materialist and dualist, doubt or deny this contending that human beings, like plays, are “gap-inclusive,” and thus wholly cease to exist at the death of the body only to be alive again at some later time.[[14]](#footnote-14) Indeed, those who believe that persons are bodies or strongly supervenient on bodies can hardly hold any other position. While such views avoid some obvious difficulties, this is not at all consonant with many traditional Catholic views, such as the belief in purgatory, prayer for the dead, and the cult of the Saints. Catholic theology teaches that, in addition to the last judgment that precedes the resurrection, there is an individual judgment for each person immediately after death, as a result of which the dead even now either enjoy the bliss of heaven or experience the pains of Hell despite the fact that last trumpet has yet to sound, while many others languish in Purgatory until the time of their purification is completed. Among these, despite all his vaunted materialism, is Aquinas himself, who claims that a special divine dispensation makes experience and thought possible for disembodied souls precisely for this end, complete with telepathic communication between distinct individuals. Still, complete restoration of human nature awaits the bodily resurrection of the dead. Non-Catholics, of course, will not feel themselves bound by the same teachings; here I will only say that the view I have put forward here is consistent with these teachings and so need not be a stumbling block acceptance on the part of Catholics.

In addition, the idea that persons are “gappy” leads to difficulties in its own right that that are not faced by the view that the soul and its consciousness continues to exist after the death of the body. Proponents of the memory criterion of personal identity must face the famous duplication argument, which seems to entail that memory is not, after all, a sufficient condition for personal identity across the gap.[[15]](#footnote-15) Those who require bodily continuity as the criterion of personal identity, as does Aquinas, have to insist that the glorified bodies of the resurrected be numerically identical to the ordinary human bodies that they possessed at death. This leads to a number of puzzle cases involving bodies that share the same matter at the moment of death, a problem by no means limited to the obvious case of cannibalism. It is very likely that each one of us possesses some of the atoms that belonged to other human beings at the point of death and even conceivable that there is someone who, at the point of death, is mostly or even entirely composed of such atoms upon whom other deceased persons have a prior claim. If resurrection requires that one get one’s exact body back, how could such a person be resurrected at all? These objections are probably not insuperable, but they do need to be effectively answered. The dualist view scouted here is not troubled by them.

If neither memory nor bodily continuity are sufficient for personal identity, what will do? My suggestion, one made by other dualists, is that personal identity is ontologically constituted by *sameness of soul*. The matter of the body is constantly changing and the body itself constantly gaining and losing qualitative attributes. The metaphysical possibility of brain transplants, body-switching and so on seems to undermine the claim that sameness of body is a necessary condition for personal identity. Yet, for the same reason, the possibility that someone could “scrub” my memory clean and replace it wholesale with a set of putative memories that were in fact completely fabricated seemingly gives the lie to the notion that continuity of memory is either necessary or sufficient for one’s being the same person. On the dualism recommended here, however, the soul is a sempiternal entity not subject to temporal passage, and thus neither endurant nor perdurant considered in itself, but by nature “timeless,” though in relation to time as its act terminates in its effect it can be described as endurant. It is thus intrinsically self-identical. Further, inasmuch as it is a substance, a simple substance and such as to possess its act of existence in a timeless manner, the soul is also naturally immortal in relation to the body. By contrast, both the body and the conscious self are passing things of this world, the former a compound substance consisting of many simple substances trapped in temporary collections by forces and efficient causes, and the latter something dependent for its existence on the continued existence and operation of the former. That both of these ordinarily cease with the death of the body is therefore what we would expect. However, since numerically one and the same soul continues to exist independently from both the body and its consciousness, it is something that continues to exist through all the changes that befall a person, including death, and thus serves as the ontological criterion for personal identity.

Sameness of soul thus provides a metaphysical account of personal identity. Of course, there is no way for anyone to be absolutely certain that anyone, including ourselves, are the same soul today that they were yesterday, so one might question whether the sameness of soul criterion for personal identity is of any epistemic use to us. Certainly, as Swinburne argues, any such judgments would have to be based on indirect evidence, such as apparent bodily continuity, continuity of memory, similarity of appearance and similarity of personality.[[16]](#footnote-16) However, one might well argue that this is the best we could expect under any circumstances and that the indirectness and corrigibility of such evidence is itself what we would expect to be the case if personal identity were constituted by sameness of soul. Nothing to which we have immediate access can make this to be the case.

On the version of dualism recommended here, I will be resurrected if my soul once again becomes conscious through the operation and influence of my body, just as it was prior to my death. For this it is not required that I possess numerically one and the same body that I had at the moment of death, only one that is qualitatively similar to that body in certain respects, especially with regard to the structure of its brain, so that I possess ongoing conscious experience relevantly connected to my previous experience as I remember it. If conscious experience is continuous between death and resurrection, then there will be no break in one’s conscious experience, only the replacement of one, miraculous cause of contentful consciousness with another, the glorified body that will arise at the last trumpet. If the soul is dormant in the “intermission” that separates death from resurrection, then the body and its associated memory will supply the sort of continuity that it provides across gaps in experience during life, such as sleep and unconsciousness due to fainting, blows to the head, and anaesthesia. For as Reid points out, if as Locke claims “one thing cannot have two beginnings,” then contentful consciousness, being gappy, cannot be the principle of personal identity and needs some further principle beyond itself, perhaps knowable only indirectly, as the ontological principle of its unity.[[17]](#footnote-17)

**Conclusion**

None of the objections to Substance Dualism that we have considered here - and these appear to be the major ones - appear to be insuperable. As such, the dismissive view taken toward dualism by many philosophers and scientists seems largely without warrant, especially given that the lockstep conformity in favor of materialism appears to be weakening.[[18]](#footnote-18) At the same time, the many alternatives to Dualism do not seem to be motivated by any genuine theoretical impulse - they all have the look of *ad hoc* constructions devised primarily to admit the bankruptcy of materialism while avoiding the Substance Dualism that their own arguments seem to entail. Given that Substance Dualism is the default position in the philosophy of mind, the lack of a better theory behooves us to frankly admit what we all know to be true deep down: that there is a soul in addition to the body, existing not merely as a function, organ, or dependent part, but in its own right, and that I am this soul while I only have this body, despite the fact that both soul and body are indispensable for contentful consciousness.

1. James D. Madden, *Mind, Matter & Nature*, Washington, DC, Catholic University of America Press, 2013, 60-88. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. For reasons that will emerge, and for others that I have discussed elsewhere, I am persuaded that “no consciousness” views are certainly “flat-out” false and the reductive materialism is *almost* certainly false i.e., even if true, such that we could never, even in principle, have any rational justification for believing it. Beyond that, although I have a marked (and rationally defensible) preference for Substance Dualism, I have to admit that other views, such as Emergent Materialism, Panpsychism, Idealism, and so on are at least possibly true. Perhaps even some form of Non-Reductive Materialism could turn out to be true. At any rate, these other views are still in the running, so I am somewhat less dogmatic in this area than perhaps I am in others. Since, as I have argued elsewhere, Hylomorphism really amounts to no distinct, substantive view of its own (see my essay, “Could Sensation be a Bodily Act?” - also on this website) it will easily accommodate itself to whichever of these views proves to be correct at the end of the day, so that as long as any of them is in the field so is Hylomorphism. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See my essays “Mind, Body, Space, and Time,” and “From Private Experience to Public Language,” also on this website. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See Lisa Shapiro, ed. and trans., *The Correspondence between Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia and Rene Descartes*, Chicago, IL, Chicago University Press, 2007, 61-73. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. See Tomas Bogardus, “Undefeated Dualism,” *Philosophical Studies* 165 (2), (2013), 445-466 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. In the aforementioned essay, “From Private Experience to Public Language” on *Philpapers*. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. See my *How Free Will Works: A Dualist Theory of Human Action*, Eugene, OR, Wipf and Stock, 2011, 51-70. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. See my essay, *Causal Necessity and the Future: Two Views*, also on this website. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. I note in passing that Hylomorphists who push these objections to Dualism (as does Madden, op. cit. 65-69) are generally silent about how their own view avoids these difficulties. In Madden’s case, it appears that he ultimately denies that the body exists as a material thing, a collection of externally related *mikra* captured in fields of force and operating in accordance with the laws of motion. Instead, these entities are merely “virtually present” in the body and no longer possess their proper natures, much as chemicals lose their observable properties when they combine in reactions. Such a view is almost certainly empirically false unless formulated in such a way that it is intolerably vague and obscure. Nor can it be used to evade facing the problem of the conservation laws, which so far as we know apply to the human body in exactly the same way as any other physical system. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. See Descartes’ Letter to Henry More, 5 February 1649, in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, Volume III,* London, Cambridge University Press, 1991, 365-367 - known more familiarly as CSMK - Nicolas Malebranche, *The Search After Truth*, Thomas Lennon and Paul J. Olscamp, eds., London, Cambridge University Press, 1997, 98, 323-325, and John Norris, *An Essay Towards The Theory of the Ideal or Intelligible World*, Vol. II, London, Edmund Parker, 1722 (facsimile reprint by Kessinger, 2006), 58-100. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. See my essay “Pain and Evil,” also on this website. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. As I have argued in my aforementioned essay. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. See my “Could Sensation be a Bodily Act?” - also on this website. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. See, for example, R. T. Herbert, *Paradox and Identity in Theology*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 1979, 127-75, especially 129-147. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. But see R. T. Herbert, op. cit. 162-170 and his article, “One Short Sleep Past?” *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 40 (2), 1996, 85 - 99. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. See his contribution to Sydney Shoemaker and Richard Swinburne, *Personal Identit*y, London, Blackwell, 1984, 49-66. See also Richard Swinburne, *The Evolution of the Sou*l, revised edition, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1997, 147-173. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, Charlestown, MA, Samuel Etheridge, Jr., 1813 (Facsimile reprint by MIT Press with an introduction by Baruch Brody, 1969), 356-362. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. See, for example, Robert C. Koons and George Bealer, eds., *The Waning of Materialism*, New York, Oxford, 2010 and Andrea LaVazza and Howard Robinson, *Contemporary Dualism: A Defense*, London, Routledge, 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)