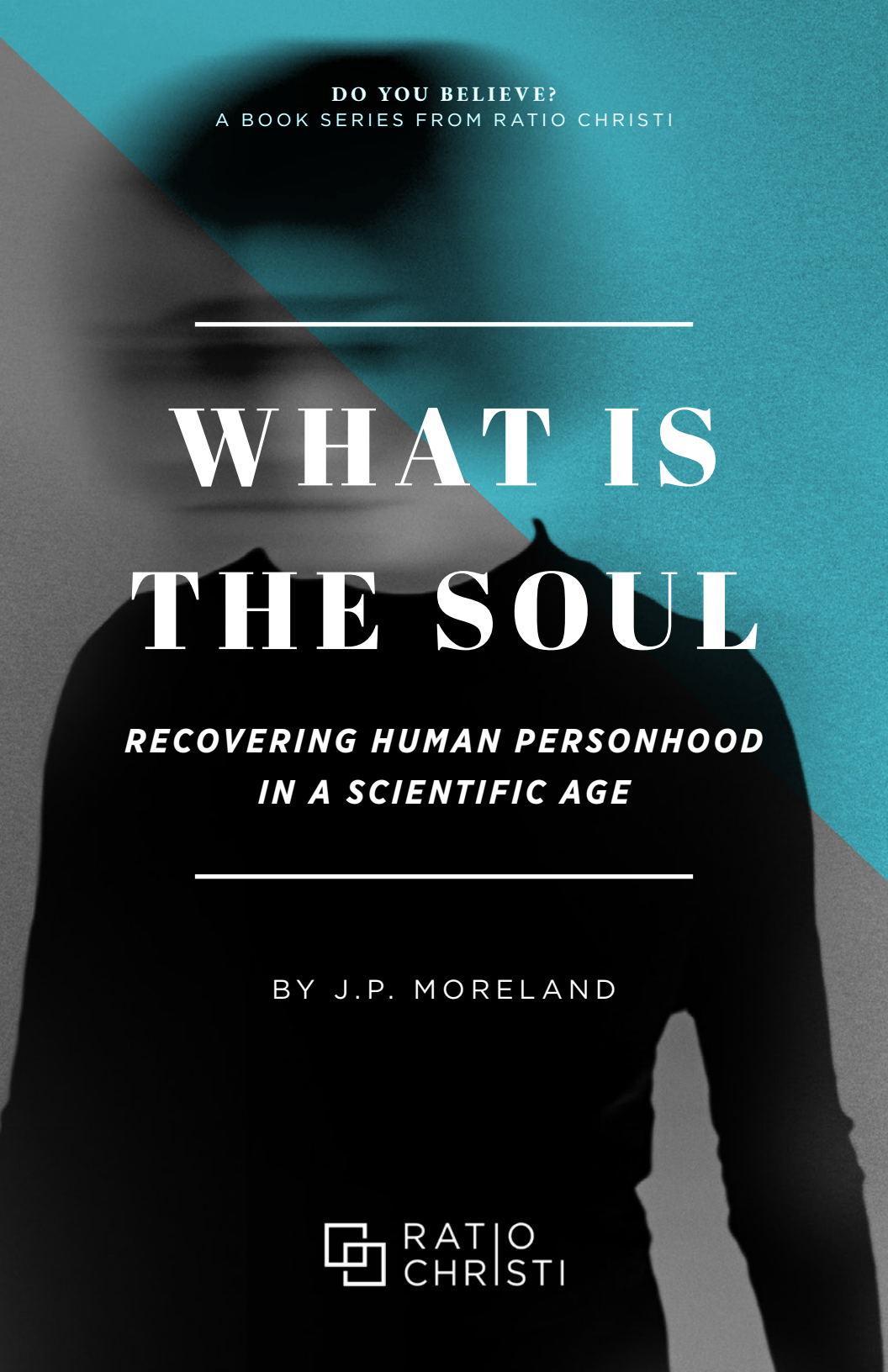
DO YOU BELIEVE?
A BOOK SERIES FROM RATIO CHRISTI
WHAT IS THE SOUL
RECOVERING HUMAN PERSONHOOD IN A SCIENTIFIC AGE
BY J.P. MORELAND
RATIO CHRISTI

FAITH & REASON are at odds in our culture. For many, faith has come to mean little more than wishful thinking and blind belief. Such a concept is completely foreign to the pages of Scripture and historical Christianity. As Edward Feser notes, "In short, reason tells us that there is a God and that he has revealed such-and-such a truth; faith is then a matter of believing what reason has shown God to have revealed. In that sense faith is not only not at odds with reason but is grounded in reason."

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INTRODUCTION

Recently, *Time* magazine featured an article defending stem-cell research on human embryos: "These [embryos] are microscopic groupings of a few differentiated cells. There is nothing human about them, except potential—and, if you choose to believe it, a soul."[1] This statement expresses a widely-held opinion that when it comes to belief in the soul, you're on your own. There is no evidence one way or another. You must simply choose arbitrarily—or, perhaps, on the basis of private feelings—what you believe about the soul. Geneticist Francis Crick declares in his book *The Astonishing Hypothesis* that who you and I are, is "in fact no more than the behavior of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules."[2] "You" are not a soul.

Regardless of how often this mantra is recited, nothing could be further from the truth. In reality, a very strong case can be offered for the view that consciousness and the soul are *immaterial*—not physical—realities. Thinking through this issue is not only fascinating, but a matter of considerable importance. French philosopher Blaise Pascal rightly remarked that the soul's nature is so important that one must have lost all feeling not to care about the issue.

For at least the following five reasons, it is important to learn the issues central to the case for the immaterial nature of consciousness and the soul. First, for people of faith, which is most of the majority world's six billion people, life after death is predicated on the existence of a soul. For those with Judeo-Christian backgrounds, scriptures teaches that there is a soul and that it survives death. For example, in Matthew 10:28, Jesus states "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but are not able to kill the soul; rather, be afraid of the One who is able to destroy soul as well as body in hell." The implicit point: death of the body does not end human existence.

The historic Christian position is nicely stated by H. D. Lewis: "Throughout the centuries Christians have believed that each human person consists in a soul and body; that the soul survived the death of the body; and that its future life will be immortal."[3]

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1 Michael Kinsley, "If You Believe Embryos Are Humans..." *Time* (June 25, 2001), 80.

2 Francis Crick, *The Astonishing Hypothesis: The Scientific Search for the Soul* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1994), 3.

3 H. D. Lewis, *Christian Theism* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1984), 125. For a defense of a dualist understanding of biblical teaching, see J. P. Moreland and Scott Rae, *Body and Soul* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2000), ch. 1; John Cooper, *Body, Soul & Life Everlasting* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, rev. ed., 2000).

Second, as the *Time* article implies, *the reality of the soul is important to various ethical issues that involve an understanding of human persons.* For example, is personhood—and therefore worth or dignity—defined by a properly-functioning body/brain, or something deeper—even if someone is physically or mentally handicapped? That is, is personhood defined by *function*, or by *essence*? If defined by *function*, we may determine certain persons more worthy of life than others—the fit, the smart, the beautiful. But if defined by essence, even the most helpless life is worthy of respect and care. Does the soul make a difference in ethics? Absolutely!

Third, *belief in life after death is related to a commitment to the presumed authority of science—along with a conviction that belief in the soul is scientifically discredited*. As John Hick points out, "This considerable decline within society as a whole...of the belief in personal immortality clearly reflects the assumption within our culture that we should only believe in what we experience, plus what the accredited sciences certify to us."[4]

Fourth, *understanding the immaterial nature of the human spirit is crucial to ethics and character formation*. Without a grasp of the soul's nature, it becomes virtually impossible to develop a detailed model of spiritual formation.

Finally, *there has been a connection both historically and theologically between the existence of a substantial soul and the supernatural realm*. If the soul exists, then there's good reason to think that a personal, self-aware Being—God—exists. When it comes to explaining how consciousness could, without outside assistance, emerge out of non-conscious matter, the naturalist (who does not believe in a soul) runs into problems. Naturalist philosopher of mind John Searle notes that "the leading problem in the biological sciences is the problem of explaining how neurobiological processes cause conscious experiences."[5]Ned Block, another naturalist, admits: "Researchers are *stumped*" on this one.[6] The theist, however, sees the conscious soul as fitting quite naturally into the world, which has been made by a conscious Creator.

For these reasons, and many others, our belief and conviction regarding the soul and life hereafter, is essential to our lives here and now. It's not a trivial matter, so we should weigh the options carefully.

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4 John H. Hick, *Death & Eternal Life* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980), 92.

5 John Searle, "The Mystery of Consciousness: Part II," *New York Review of Books* (16 Nov. 1995), 61.

6 "Consciousness" in *A Companion to the Philosophy of Mind,* ed. Samuel Guttenplan (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 1994), 211.

CHAPTER 1
DECIDING AMONG THE OPTIONS

Throughout history the vast majority of people, educated and uneducated alike, have been dualists. Dualism is the view that human beings are both a body and soul—dual entities. Further, dualism, is intuitive to human beings: across time and cultures human beings generally perceive themselves as body and soul. Even philosophers who deny dualism admit that it has been the commonsense view. Thus, physicalist Jaegwon Kim acknowledges that "We commonly think that we, as persons, have a mental and bodily dimension . . . . Something like this dualism of personhood, I believe, is common lore shared across most cultures and religious traditions . . . ."[7]

Today, however, it is widely believed that science has rendered this commonsense view obsolete and implausible. As Christian physicalist Nancey Murphy says, even though science cannot prove dualism is false, still, "science has provided a massive amount of evidence suggesting that we need not postulate the existence of an entity such as a soul or mind in order to explain life and consciousness."[8] Is Murphy right about this? Is there evidence, and if so, what does the evidence show? In the chapters to follow I will argue that dualism is true and physicalism is false, that the evidence from philosophy overwhelmingly supports dualism, and, contra Murphy, that evidence from science provides support for neither, as it leaves the nature of consciousness and the self wholly unaddressed. In this chapter we will lay out some preliminary definitions and explanations that will inform the chapters to follow.

The Mind/Body Problem

We'll start with the term that summarizes both the debate and the subject matter; the "mind/body problem." The mind/body problem focuses on the make-up of human persons. Put crudely, it seeks to resolve this question: *What am I and my conscious life made of?* Currently, there are two main answers to this question: physicalism and dualism. Strict *Physicalism* (hereafter, *Physicalism*) claims that a human being is completely physical;

7 Jaegwon Kim, "Lonely Souls: Causality and Substance Dualism," in *Soul, Body and Survival,* ed. Kevin Corcoran (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 30.

8 Nancey Murphy, "Human Nature: Historical, Scientific, and Religious Issues," in Warren S. Brown, Nancey Murphy and H. Newton Malony, *Whatever Happened to the Soul?* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 18.

dualism maintains that a human being is both physical and mental, body and soul.

Substances, Properties and Events

A substance is a particular thing like a person, dog, or acorn. Substances have properties like "that dog is brown." Properties can come and go: the dog can change color. Same dog, same substance, different properties. Substances can have properties such as dogs have color, but properties can't have substances: we wouldn't say that brownness is very "doggish." Substances are the fundamental thing—the coat hanger that properties "hang on" or adhere in.

Turning to human beings, we are a substance, a human substance, which is unlike a dog substance or other "natural kinds." Non-essential characteristics of human beings like being short or slow are properties. What makes these characteristics non-essential is you would still be a human being even of you were tall and fast. This brings us to our final term, an "event."

Events

Finally, there are entities in the world called *events*. Examples of events are a flash of lightning, the dropping of a ball, the having of a thought, the change of a leaf, and the continued possession of sweetness by an apple (this would be a series of events). *Events are states or changes of states of substances. An event is the coming or going of a property in a substance at a particular time, or the continued possession of a property by a substance throughout a time.* "This shirt's being green now" and "this acorn's changing shape then" are both examples of events.

Let's stop here for a moment. You may be wondering where we are going with these definitions and distinctions. Perhaps this point will help: every seven years or so the cells in your body completely replace themselves. Also, your properties change. If you were nothing other than your cells, nothing other than your body, nothing other than your properties, you would no longer be here. But you are, so these things are distinct, and so we refer to them distinctly.

Keeping these critical distinctions in mind, we can now move on to consider in more detail the different mind/body views. We'll look first at physicalism and then dualism.

An Overview of Physicalism and Dualism

According to ***physicalism***, a human being is merely a physical entity. According to physicalism, the only things that exist are physical substances, properties, and events. A human being is, and only is, a material body with a brain and central nervous system.[9]

9 Some physicalists characterize their view as the claim that all particulars are physical and that whatever mental properties/events exist are determined by and dependent upon the physical nature of the world. See Frank Jackson, *From Metaphysics to Ethics* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), ch. 1. However, this view is either a version of property dualism or it reduces to a version of physicalism.

The human brain is, and only is, a physical substance with physical properties—a certain weight, volume, size, electrical activity, chemical composition, and so forth.

The events that occur in the brain are also purely physical events. For example, the brain contains a number of elongated cells that carry various impulses. These cells are called *neurons*. Various neurons make contact with other neurons through connections or points of contact called *synapses. C-fibers* are certain types of neurons that innervate the skin and carry pain impulses to the brain. So when someone has an occasion of pain or an occurrence of a thought, physicalists hold that these are merely physical events—events where certain C-fibers are firing or certain electrical and chemical events are happening in the brain and central nervous system.

In this way, physicalists believe that we are merely a physical substance, that has physical properties, in which occur physical events. My conscious mental life of thoughts, emotions, and pain are nothing but physical events in my brain and nervous system. The neurophysiologist can, in principle, describe these events solely in terms of C-fibers, neurons, and the chemical and physical properties of the brain. For the physicalist, I am a material substance, a creature made of matter—nothing more, nothing less.

For the physicalist, there is only matter: material objects like computers, carbon atoms, and billiard balls; with material properties such as being hard, pliable, and magnetic; undergoing physical events like becoming soft, non-pliable, and unmagnetized.

Another very crucial observation to make about material substances, properties, and events is this: *No material thing presupposes or has reference to consciousness for it to exist or be characterized.* You will search in vain through a physics or chemistry textbook to find consciousness included in any description of matter. A completely physical description of the world would not include *any* terms that make reference to or characterize the existence and nature of consciousness.

Dualists disagree with physicalists. According to them, genuinely mental entities are real. What is a mental entity? As a definition might just confuse the matter, I'll describe three different types of mental events: sensations, propositional attitudes, and acts of the will. First, there are various kinds of *sensations*: experiences of colors, sounds, smells, tastes, textures, pains, and itches. Sensations are individual things that occur at particular times. I can have a sensation of red after looking in a certain direction or by closing my eyes and daydreaming. An experience of pain will arise at a certain time, say, after I am stuck with a pin.

Further, sensations have, as their very essence, a felt quality that makes them what they are. What makes pain, pain is its felt quality. Sensations are not identical to things outside a person's body—for instance, a feeling of pain is not the same thing as being stuck with a pin and shouting, "Ouch!" Sensations are essentially characterized by a certain conscious feel and thus, they presuppose consciousness for their existence and description. *If there were no conscious beings, there would be no sensations.*

Second, there are things called *propositional attitudes:* having a certain mental attitude or posture toward a particular fact in the world that utilizes propositional content. For

example, one can hope, desire, fear, think, or believe the proposition, "The Kansas City Royals are a great baseball team." Propositional attitudes include at least two components:

(a) There is *the attitude itself.* Hopes, fears, dreads, wishes, thoughts, and the like are all different attitudes or different states of consciousness, and t*hey are all different based on their conscious feel.* A *hope* is a different form of consciousness from an episode of *fear*.

(b) They all have *a content or a meaning* embedded in the propositional attitude. That is, while a person has a propositional attitude like a hope that it will rain, in addition to the "hope" there is the mental content "that it will rain" that is equally defining of the mental state. My hope that it will rain is different from my hope that taxes will be cut. The contents of these two hopes have different *meanings* in my consciousness.

So if there were no conscious selves, there would be no propositional attitudes.

Third, there are *acts of free will or purposings.* What is a purposing? If, unknown to me, my arm is tied down and I still try to raise it, then the purposing is *the trying to raise my arm.* Intentional actions are acts of will performed by conscious selves.

To summarize, dualists argue that mental events such as sensations, propositional attitudes and acts of the will are all examples of genuine mental—not physical—entities.

Now here, I should clarify that in order to make a complicated subject comprehensible I have chosen not to explore various nuanced positions, and there are many for both physicalism and dualism.

For our purposes, what is important to know is that there are two different types of dualists. There are those who view human beings as essentially physical entities, but they view the brain as having truly mental (non-physical) properties. These are called property dualists. Many dualists, however, go further, holding that human beings—not just their brains—are composed of both mind and matter. These are called substance dualists.

In the following chapters I will argue for substance dualism, both because I believe it's true, and because in doing so we will automatically cover arguments put forth by property dualists.

One final topic before turning to the arguments, and that is the strategy we'll employ: how we will demonstrate dualism to be true and physicalism, false.

Identity, Causation and Correlation

The eighteenth-century philosopher/theologian Joseph Butler once remarked that *everything is itself and not something else.* This simple truth has profound implications. Suppose you want to know whether J.P. Moreland is Eileen Spiek's youngest son. If J.P. Moreland is identical to Eileen Spiek's youngest son (everything true of one is true of the other), then in reality, we are talking about one single thing: J.P. Moreland, who *is* Eileen

Spiek's youngest son. However, if even one small thing is true of J.P. Moreland and *not* true of Eileen Spiek's youngest son, then these are two entirely different people. Furthermore, J.P. Moreland is identical to himself and not different from himself. So if J.P. Moreland is *not* identical to Eileen Spiek's youngest son, then in reality we must be talking about two things, not one.

This illustration suggests a truth about the nature of identity known as Leibniz' Law of the Indiscernibility of Identicals, which simply means: if you've got two truly identical things (e.g., Bobby and Robert, who are really one and the same), *then there is only one thing you are talking about—not two.* This means that *any truth that applies to Bobby will apply to Robert as well.* This suggests a test for identity: If you could find one thing true of Bobby that is not true of Robert, or vice versa, then Bobby cannot be identical to Robert. Further, if you could find one thing that could *possibly* be true of Bobby and not Robert (or vice versa), even if it isn't *actually* true, then Bobby cannot be identical to Robert.

So, this is our strategy: because physicalists believe that everything concerning consciousness is ultimately physical, *if we can find just one thing true, or even possibly true of the mind and not of the brain, or vice versa, then dualism is established. The mind is not the brain.*

One final word of clarification: for every mental activity, a neurophysiologist can find a physical activity in the brain with which it is correlated. But just because A causes B, or just because A and B are constantly correlated with each other, that does not mean that A is identical to B. Correlation is not the same thing as identity. But again, if something is true—or even possibly true—of a mental substance, property, or event, that is not true or possibly true of a physical substance, property, or event, then physicalism is false.

CHAPTER 2

EVIDENCE PART 1
PROPERTIES OF CONSCIOUSNESS

You'll remember that in the last chapter we distinguished between substances and properties. A dog is a substance, being brown is a property. In this chapter, we will make the case that the properties of consciousness are not physical but mental properties. How might we do this? As discussed in the previous chapter, we will show that there are features of mental states that are not features of physical states and therefore cannot be one and the same. While there are a number of examples, we will focus attention on three.

#1: Introspection

Mental states are characterized by their intrinsic, subjective, inner, private, qualitative feel, made present to a subject by "first-person" introspection. What do we mean by "first-person"? You're familiar with the way we conjugate verbs:

1st person singular: I think
2nd person singular: You think
3rd person singular: He/she/it thinks
1st person plural: We think
2nd person plural: You think
3rd person plural: They think

When we speak of "first-person" experiences, we refer to the inner subjective insight each of us has that no one else has access to (if we do have public access to something, this would make it "third-person"). A TV monitor that a security guard looks at presents a *publicly accessible* view of a particular part of the building being captured by a particular camera, but the TV monitor itself does not have an *inner experience* of what it is focused on. On the other hand, the security guard has his own inner experience (first-person) when he views the monitor, and what he experiences is inaccessible to the rest of us—even if we are gazing at the same monitor!

In general, mental states have some or all of the following features, none of which is

a physical feature of anything: Mental states like pains have an intrinsic, raw conscious feel. Most—if not all—mental states have intentionality, i.e., they are *of* or *about* things. Mental states are inner, private, and known by first-person, direct introspection. Any way one has of knowing about a physical entity is available to everyone else, including ways of knowing about one's brain. But a subject has a way of knowing about his own mental states not available to others—through introspection. *He alone knows his own mind in the first-person. Not even God—who knows all truths—can have my first-person experiences.*

Mental states are made up of *directly-available*—or self-presenting—properties. One can be aware of the external, physical world only by means of one's mental states; *here we have the ultimate kind of private property! Mental states are necessarily individually owned.* No *physical* state, however, is necessarily owned, much less necessarily owned by a specific subject. The examination of physical states and events is in principle *publicly accessible*; a mental event is necessarily *private* or *directly accessible* to the thinker only.

We could add other categories of difference. Some sensations are *vague* (e.g., a sensation of an object may be fuzzy or vague), but no physical state is vague. Some sensations are *pleasurable or unpleasurable*, but nothing physical has these properties, nor does anything have the property of *familiarity*, like when someone or something looks familiar.

Since mental states have these features and physical states do not, mental states cannot be identical to physical states. While every time some thought or other mental event occurs in the mind, there will occur in the brain some spatially-located event correlated with it, but they are not the same event (where *exactly* in the brain is my thought about the tree outside my window?).

#2: The Knowledge Argument

There is a second argument for mental, non-physical properties called the Knowledge Argument, variously formulated by Thomas Nagel, Frank Jackson, and Saul Kripke.[10] A standard presentation of the thought experiment has it that Mary, a brilliant scientist blind from birth, knows all the physical facts relevant to acts of perception. But when she suddenly gains the ability to see, she clearly gains knowledge of new facts. Since she knew all the physical facts before recovering her sight, and since she gains knowledge of new facts, these facts must not be *physical* facts and, moreover, given Mary's situation, they must be *mental* facts.

Generally speaking there are three forms of knowledge and each is irreducible to the other:

1. *Knowledge by acquaintance:* One has such knowledge when one is directly

10 Thomas Nagel, "What Is It Like to be a Bat?" *The Philosophical Review* 83 (1974): 435-50; Frank Jackson, "Epiphenomenal Qualia," *Philosophical Quarterly* 32 (April 1982): 127-36; Saul Kripke, "Naming and Necessity," in S*emantics of Natural Languages*, ed. Donald Davidson and Gilbert Harman (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1972), 253-355. Subsequently, Jackson has raised doubts about the Knowledge Argument. See his "What Mary Didn't Know," *Journal of Philosophy* 83 (1986): 291-95.

aware of something (e.g., when a person sees an apple directly before her, she knows it by acquaintance).

2. *Propositional knowledge:* This is knowledge that a proposition is true. For example, knowledge that "the object there is an apple" requires having a concept of an apple and knowing that the object under consideration satisfies the concept.

3. ***Know-how:*** This is the knowledge to do certain things (e.g., to use apples for certain purposes, like making apple sauce or apple pie).

By way of application, when Mary sees the red apple with her eyes she gains six new kinds of knowledge: knowledge by acquaintance, propositional knowledge, and skill knowledge, three with regard to the color red and three in her sensation of red.

(a) *Mary now knows by acquaintance what redness is.*

(b) Upon further reflection and experience, *Mary can now know that "Necessarily, red is a color"—and similar things.*

(c) *Mary also gains skill about comparing or sorting objects on the basis of their color, of how to arrange color patterns that are most beautiful or natural to the eye, etc.*

(d) Further, *Mary gains knowledge about her sensation of red.* She is now aware of having a sensation of red for the first time and can be aware of a specific sensation of red being pleasurable, vague, etc.

(e) *Mary has propositional knowledge about her sensations.* She could know that a sensation of red is more like a sensation of green than it is like a sour taste. She can know that the way the apple appears to her now is vivid, pleasant, or like the way the orange appeared to her (namely, redly) yesterday in bad lighting.

(f) Finally, *she has skill about her sensations.* She can recall them to memory, re-image things in her mind, adjust her glasses until her sensations of color are vivid, etc.

The knowledge Mary acquired, (a)-(f), upon receiving her sight, allows us to see the content, and the type of content, that is the unique property of consciousness.

#3 Consciousness and Intentionality

The third argument is based on intentionality: the "ofness" or "aboutness" of various mental states. Some (perhaps all) mental states have intentionality. No physical state has intentionality. Consider the following facts about intentionality:

1. *When one represents a mental act to oneself, there are no sense data associated with it; this is not so with physical states and their relations.* For example, when Beau tries to gain insight about his thought that grass is green, the physical

state of grass being green cannot be understood without treating it as having the sensory property of being green. *But the thought itself is not green*, and, indeed, no sensory qualities at all may be attributed to the thought that grass is green.

2. *Intentionality is completely unrestricted with regard to the kind of object it can hold as a term—anything whatever can have a mental act directed upon it* (one can have a thought of God, unicorns, souls, the even numbers, or the universe as a whole).

3. *To grasp a mental act one must engage in a reflexive act of self-awareness, but no such reflexivity is required to grasp a physical object, property, or relation.* To grasp something's size, shape or mass, requires no introspection, merely an objective third-person perspective.

4. Physical objects enter into physical relations with other objects, for example, t*he cup is to the left of the book; "to the left of" is a physical relation.* What's true of all physical relations is the objects involved are real, identifiable, material objects, but *intentionality can be of nonexistent things* (e.g., one can think of Zeus or have a fear about something unreal).

A helpful thought experiment shows exactly what is missing when mental intentionality is absent from physical events. The thought experiment, proposed by philosopher John Searle, is called the *Chinese Room:*

> *Imagine that you are locked in a room, and in this room are several baskets full of Chinese symbols. Imagine that you (like me) do not understand a word of Chinese, but that you are given a rule book in English for manipulating the Chinese symbols. The rules specify the manipulations of symbols purely formally, in terms of their syntax, not their semantics. So the rule might say: "Take a squiggle-squiggle out of basket number one and put it next to a squoggle-squoggle sign from basket number two." Now suppose that some other Chinese symbols are passed into the room, and that you are given further rules for passing back Chinese symbols out of the room. Suppose that unknown to you the symbols passed into the room are called "questions" by the people outside the room, and the symbols you pass back out of the room are called "answers to the questions." Suppose, furthermore, that the programmers are so good at designing the programs and that you are so good at manipulating the symbols, that very soon your answers are indistinguishable from those of a native Chinese speaker. There you are locked in your room shuffling your Chinese symbols and passing out Chinese symbols in response to incoming Chinese symbols . . . . Now the point of the story is simply this: by virtue of implementing a formal computer program from the point of view of an outside observer, you behave exactly as if you*

understood Chinese, but all the same you don't understand a word of Chinese.[11]

The person in this thought experiment represents a "mindless" computer, carrying out functions that make it appear to have conscious intentionality. But it doesn't. The person in the room does not "know" Chinese, does not know "what it's like to know" Chinese, does not have thoughts or beliefs expressed in Chinese, etc. What the person in the room lacks is precisely what the physicalist account of mental intentionality lacks: the presence of inner subjective awareness, understanding, intentionality, or consciousness. And because the physicalist account is lacking something present in the dualist account, they cannot be one and the same.

In this chapter we've seen three strong reasons to affirm that mental properties are not identical to physical properties. In the next chapter we will turn from properties to substance and consider arguments for why human beings themselves cannot simply be material objects.

11 John Searle, *Minds, Brains, and Science* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 32-33. Cf. John Searle, "Minds, Brains, and Programs," *The Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 3 (1980): 417-24.

CHAPTER 3

EVIDENCE PART 2
THE SUBSTANCE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

In this chapter we will argue that human beings are not merely physical objects with "mindful" thoughts and sensations, but that the very essence of "humanness" is being both body and soul, mind and matter. What we will see is that to make sense of consciousness there must be some enduring self that possesses our moods, states, and experiences, an "I" that has all these experiences, not a new "I" with every new experience. We'll look at four arguments.

Argument #1: Our Basic Awareness of the Self

When we enter most deeply into ourselves, we become aware of a very basic fact presented to us: *We are aware of our own self* (ego, *I*, center of consciousness) *as being distinct from our bodies and from any particular mental experience; we are aware of ourselves as a seamless whole, not a bundle of perceptions, identities, memories, and moods; and unlike a material object, we are aware of an unextended center of consciousness.* I simply have a basic, direct awareness of the fact that I am not identical to my body or my mental events; rather, I am the immaterial self that *has* a body and a conscious mental life.

We can see this through personal experience. Right now I am looking at a chair in my office. As I walk toward the chair, I experience a series of what are called phenomenological objects or chair representations. That is, I have several different chair experiences that replace one another in rapid succession. As I approach the chair, my chair sensations vary. If I pay attention, I am also aware of two more things. First, I do not simply experience a series of sense-images of a chair. Rather, through self-awareness, I also experience the fact that it is I myself who has each chair experience. Each chair sensation produced at each angle of perspective has a perceiver who is I. An "I" accompanies each sense experience to produce a series of awarenesses—"I am experiencing a chair sense image now."

I am also aware of the basic fact that the same self that is currently having a fairly large chair experience (as my eyes come to within twelve inches of the chair) is the very same self as the one who had all of the other chair experiences preceding this current one. *Through self-awareness, I am aware of the fact that I am an enduring "I" who was and is (and will be)*

present as the owner of all the experiences in the series.

These two facts—I am the owner of my experiences, and I am an enduring self—show that *I am not identical to my experiences.* I am the conscious thing that has them. I am also aware of myself as a simple, uncomposed and spatially unextended center of consciousness (I am "fully present" throughout my body; if my arm is cut off, I do not become 4/5 of a self). In short, I am a mental substance.

Argument #2: Unity and the First-Person Perspective

A complete physicalist description of the world would be one in which everything would be exhaustively described from a third-person point of view in terms of objects, properties, processes, and their spatio-temporal locations. For example, a description of an apple in a room would go something like this: "There exists an object three feet from the south wall and two feet from the east wall, and that object has the property of being red, round, sweet, and so on."

The first-person point of view is the vantage point that I use to describe the world from my own perspective. Expressions of a first-person point of view utilize what are called *indexicals*—words like "I," "here," "now," "there," "then." *Here* and *now* are *where* and *when* **I am**; *there* and *then* are *where* and *when* **I am not**. Indexicals refer to me, myself. ***"I"*** *is the most basic indexical, and it refers to my self that I know by acquaintance with my own self in acts of self-awareness. I am immediately aware of my own self,* and I know who "I" refers to when I use it: It refers to me as the self-conscious, self-reflexive owner of my body and mental states.

According to physicalism, there are no fundamentally basic or intrinsic (irreducible), privileged first-person perspectives. Everything can be exhaustively described in an object language from a third-person perspective. A physicalist description of me would say, "There exists a body at a certain location that is five feet eight inches tall, weighs 160 pounds," and so forth.

But *no amount of third-person descriptions ("he," "she," "it") captures my own subjective, first-person ("I") acquaintance of my own self in acts of self-awareness.* In fact, *for any third-person description of me, it would always be an open question as to whether the person described in third-person terms was the same person as I am. I know myself as a self* ***immediately*** *through being acquainted with my own self in an act of self-awareness.* I can express that self-awareness by using the term *I*.

I refers to my own substantial soul. It does not refer to any mental property or bundle of mental properties I am having, nor does it refer to any body described from a third-person perspective. *I* is a term that refers to something that exists, and I does not refer to any object or set of properties described from a third-person point of view. Rather, *I* refers to my own self with which I am directly acquainted and which, through acts of self-awareness, I know to be the substantial uncomposed possessor of my mental states and my body.

A related argument has been offered by William Hasker. To grasp the argument, consider one's awareness of a complex fact, say one's own visual field consisting of awareness of several objects at once, including a number of different surface areas of each object such as an array of shelf items at a Wal-Mart or Home Depot. Now one may claim that such a unified awareness of one's visual field consists in the fact that there are a number of different physical parts each of which is aware only of part of and not the whole of the complex fact. However, this will not work, because it cannot account for the fact that *there is a single, unitary awareness of the entire visual field*.[12] *Only a single, uncomposed mental substance can account for the unity of one's visual field or, indeed, the unity of consciousness in general.*

Argument #3: The Modal Argument

Thought experiments have rightly been central to debates about personal identity. We all use "conceivability" as a test for the possible and the impossible; we are always running mental "simulations." I know that life on other planets is possible (even if I think it is highly unlikely or downright false) because I can conceive it to be so. I am aware of what it is to be living and to be on earth, and I conceive no necessary connections between these two properties. I know square circles are impossible because it is inconceivable, given my knowledge of being square and being circular. To be sure, conceivability is not infallibility; our judgments of what is and isn't possible, may be wrong. Still, *they provide strong evidence for genuine possibility/impossibility.* In philosophy, thinking in terms of possibility is called "modal reasoning," and arguments based on possibility and necessity are called "modal arguments." The following is a modal argument for dualism, and it begins with the following criterion:

> For any entities *x* and *y*, if I have grounds for believing I can conceive of *x* existing without *y* or vice versa, then I have good grounds for believing *x* is not essential or identical to *y* or vice versa.

Now, if the reasonableness of that criterion is granted, the argument goes as follows:[13]

(1) The law of identity: If *x* is identical to *y*, then whatever is true of *x* is true of *y* and vice versa (cp. Mark Twain = Samuel Langhorne Clemens).

(2) I can strongly conceive of myself as existing disembodied.

(3) If I can strongly conceive of some state of affairs S that S possibly obtains, then I have good grounds for believing of S that S is possible.

(4) Therefore, I have good grounds for believing of myself that it is possible for me to exist and be disembodied.

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12 Ibid., 122-46.

13 Cf. Keith Yandell, "A Defense of Dualism," *Faith and Philosophy* 12 (October 1995): 548-66; Charles Taliaferro, "Animals, Brains, and Spirits," *Faith and Philosophy* 12 (October 1995): 567-81.

(5) If some entity *x* is such that it is possible for *x* to exist without *y*, then (i) *x* is not identical to *y* and (ii) *y* is not essential to *x*.

(6) My body is not such that it is possible to exist disembodied, i.e., my body is essentially a body.

(7) Therefore, I have good grounds for believing of myself that I am not identical to my body and that my physical body is not essential to me.

Now, you may not like modal arguments or logical arguments, but what the argument attempts to do is formulate the evidence of a basic intuition: that we conceive of ourselves as distinct from our bodies. Further, it's not merely that we can conceive of ourselves as distinct from our bodies, but we do so naturally and intuitively.

I cannot undertake a full defense of the argument here, but it would be useful to a say a bit more regarding (2) above. There are a number of things about ourselves and our bodies of which we are aware that ground the conceivability expressed in (2). I am aware that I am unextended (I am "fully present" at each location in my body as Augustine claimed); I recognize that I am not a complex cluster of separable parts, nor am I the sort of thing that can be composed of physical parts. Rather, *I am a basic unity of inseparable faculties (of mind, volitions, emotion, etc.) that sustains absolute sameness through change, and that I am not capable of gradation (I cannot become 2/3 of a person).*[14]

In near-death experiences, people report themselves to have been disembodied. *They are not aware of having bodies in any sense.* Rather, *they are aware of themselves as unified egos that have sensations, thoughts, and so forth.*

Now, of course this could be false, as we mentioned, conceivability is not fool proof. However, it does provide credible support to the overall argument for dualism.

Argument #4: Free Will, Morality, Responsibility, and Punishment

When I use the term *free will,* I mean what is called libertarian freedom. I can literally choose to act or refrain from choosing. No external circumstances or even inner states (moods, inclinations, etc.) exist that are sufficient to determine my choice. My choice is up to me. I act as an agent who is the first cause or ultimate originator of my own actions. Moreover, my reasons for acting do not partially or fully cause my actions. I do. Rather, they are the goal-oriented (or teleological) ends *for the sake of which* I act. If I get a drink because I am thirsty, the desire to satisfy my thirst is the end for the sake of which I myself act freely.

It is difficult to imagine all the implications of our choices, *not* being our choices, but decisively determined outputs. *It is hard to make sense of moral obligation and responsibility*

14 In normal life, I may be focusing on speaking kindly and be unaware that I am scowling. In extreme cases (multiple personalities and split brains), I may be fragmented in my functioning or incapable of consciously and simultaneously attending to all of my mental states, but the various personalities and mental states are still all mine.

if determinism is true. These categories seem to presuppose freedom of the will. If I *ought* to do something, it seems to be necessary to suppose that I *can do* it, that I am in control of my actions. No one would say that I ought to jump to the top of a fifty-floor building and save a baby, or that I ought to stop the American Civil War in 1992, because I do not have the ability to do either. *If physicalism is true, I do not have any genuine ability to choose my actions.*

Further, our free choices not only appear to be free, they also appear to be for the sake of goals and ends, that is, they appear to be teleological (Greek: *telos* = "goal, end"). We generally believe the common-sense idea that we can freely and responsibly choose to act for a reason (even at the level of picking out a brand of breakfast cereal or toothpaste). *In the absence of overriding evidence, there are no strong grounds for denying what seems so obvious to us—namely, that we act freely with goals in mind.* But if physicalism is true, there is no genuine teleology and, thus, no libertarian free acts.

Thus, it is safe to say that *physicalism requires a radical revision of our common-sense notions of freedom, moral obligation, responsibility, and punishment.* On the other hand, if these common-sense notions are true, physicalism is false.

Now several objections have been raised as to whether physicalism must result in the kind of deterministic chain of cause and effect I've outlined above. One objection is that quantum indeterminacy demonstrates the possibility of free will even in a strictly physical universe. But this is not the case, as philosopher and atheist Stephen Cave points out:

> *Neither quantum indeterminacy nor chaos theory give us free will in the sense of a special power to transcend the laws of nature. They introduce respectively randomness and unpredictability, but not free-floating minds that cause atoms to swerve, or neurons to fire, or people to act.*

A second objection is raised by epiphenomenalists. Epiphenomenalists believe that when matter reaches a certain organizational complexity and structure, as is the case with the human brain, then matter produces mental states just as fire produces smoke. But the analogy of fire and smoke is indicative of the problem with this view: fire causes smoke, smoke doesn't cause fire. In the case of libertarian free will, it is our mental self (the smoke) that exercises control of the brain (the fire). But if epiphenomenalism is true, the mind is only a by-product of the brain, which causes nothing; the mind merely "rides" on top of the events in the brain. So epiphenomenalism offers nothing that would mitigate the determinism inherent in a strictly physical, cause and effect universe.

Robust *agent causation* is foundational to libertarian freedom, where the substantial agent is characterized by the power of active freedom, conscious awareness, the ability to think, form goals and plans, to act teleologically, and so forth. Such an agent must be an immaterial substance and not a physical object, and thus *libertarian freedom is best explained by a substance dualism.*

To summarize the argument so far we showed that the mental properties of consciousness are not identical to the physical properties of consciousness (chapter two), and in this chapter we demonstrated that a substantial soul or "self" stands behind, over, and above our shifting brain states so they cannot be one and the same. This a strong case for dualism and difficult to counter, so it's no surprise that the common response of physicalists is not an argument but rather dubiousness as to the notion of a soul and a mechanism by which it interfaces with a body. As if we had more scientific understanding of a quark, or more data for a multiverse (what kind of mechanism generates new universes?) So we will devote one final chapter to sketch the soul and address the question of mind-body integration.

CHAPTER 4

THE NATURE OF SOULS

The common strategy to counter dualism is to discredit the soul, that is, to make notions of a soul seem trivial, spooky, or cartoonish. It is none of these things. To speak of the soul is to speak of the non-material architecture of mind, and while it does engage speculation, a general blueprint is not only possible, but essential to an understanding of ourselves.

The Human Soul

As we might describe the body in discreet categories like neurology or genetics, we will do the same with the soul, considering first the different *states* of the soul, and then its various *faculties*.

States of the Soul: The soul is *a substantial, unified reality that informs its body.* The soul is to the body like God is to space—it is fully "present" at each point within the body. (For example, both my pain in my toe and the feel of the book in my hands are simultaneously present to me.) Further, *the soul and body relate to each other in a cause-effect way.* For example, if I worry in my soul, my brain chemistry will change; if I purpose in my soul to raise my arm, my arm goes up. The soul contains within it a variety of mental states, such as: *sensations, thoughts, beliefs, desires, and acts of will.* This is not as complicated as it sounds. Water can be in a cold or a hot state. Likewise, the soul can be in a feeling or thinking state.

There are at least five different states contained in the soul. (1) A *sensation* is a state of awareness, a mode of consciousness, e.g., a conscious awareness of sound or pain. A visual sensation like an experience of a tree is a state of the soul, not a state of the eyeballs. *The eyes do not see. I (my soul) see with or by means of the eyes.* (2) A *thought* is a mental content that can be expressed in an entire sentence and that only exists while it is being thought. Some thoughts logically imply other thoughts. For example "All dogs are mammals" entails "This dog is a mammal." If the former is true, the latter must be true. Some thoughts don't entail, but merely provide evidence for, other thoughts. (3) A *belief* is a person's view, accepted to varying degrees of strength, of how things really are. If a person has a belief (e.g., that it is raining), then that belief serves as the basis for the person's tendency to act on that belief

(e.g., get an umbrella). At any given time, one can have many beliefs that are not currently being contemplated. (4) A *desire* is a certain inclination to do, have, or experience certain things. Desires are either conscious or such that they can be made conscious through certain activities, for example, through therapy. (5) An *act of will* is a volition or choice, an exercise of power, an endeavoring to do a certain thing, usually for the sake of some purpose or end.

In addition to its states, at any given time, the soul has a number of capacities that are not currently being actualized or utilized.

Faculties of the soul: To understand the soul's capacities, it's helpful to think of an acorn. The acorn has certain actual characteristics or states—a specific size or color. It also has a number of capacities or potentialities that could become actual if certain things happen. For example, the acorn has the capacity to grow a root system or change into the shape of a tree. Likewise, the soul has capacities. I have the ability to see color, think about math, or desire ice cream even when I am asleep and not in the actual states just mentioned.

Capacities come in hierarchies. From lowest to highest, there are first-order capacities, then second-order capacities, and so on, until ultimate capacities are reached. Higher order capacities are realized by the development of lower order capacities under them. An acorn has the ultimate capacity to draw nourishment from the soil, but this can be actualized and unfolded only by developing the lower capacity to have a root system, then developing the still lower capacities *of* the root system.

The adult human soul has literally thousands of capacities within its structure, and the operative word is "structure:" *the soul is not just a collection of isolated, discrete, randomly related internal capacities.* Rather, the various capacities within the soul fall into natural groupings called *faculties* of the soul. In order to get hold of this, think for a moment about this list of capacities: the ability to see red, see orange; hear a dog bark, hear a tune; think about math, think about God; desire lunch, desire a family. The ability to see red is more closely related to the ability to see orange than it is to the ability to think about math. We express this insight by saying that the abilities to see red or orange are parts of the same faculty—the faculty of sight. The ability to think about math is a capacity within the thinking faculty. In general, *a faculty is a compartment of the soul that contains a natural family of related capacities.*

We are now in a position to map out the soul in more detail. All the soul's capacities to see are part of the faculty of sight. *If my eyeballs are defective, then my soul's faculty of sight will be inoperative.* Likewise, *if my eyeballs work but my soul is inattentive then I won't see what is before me.* There's more to seeing what's before us than having functional eyes; I see because I *attend* to or focus on what's before me. The soul also contains faculties of smell, touch, taste, and hearing. Taken together, these five are called sensory faculties of the soul. The will is a faculty of the soul that contains my abilities to choose. The emotional faculty of the soul contains one's abilities to experience fear, love, and so forth.

Two additional faculties of the soul are of crucial importance. The *mind* is *that*

faculty of the soul that contains thoughts and beliefs along with the relevant abilities to reason with them. It is with my mind that I think, and my mind contains my beliefs. The *spirit* is *that faculty of the soul through which the person relates to God.* Correspondingly, apart from God, capacities of the spirit are dead and inoperative.

An important aspect of the Judeo-Christian worldview, and one that shapes our modern notions of human rights and human dignity, is the belief that we are created "in the image of God." This comes from the book of Genesis, and though an inventory isn't given we might assume that it includes capacities like: the ability to reason, to relate deeply on an interpersonal level, to be morally responsible, to make free choices, to be self-conscious (we're not just aware in the way animals are, but *aware that we're aware*) and rationally reflective, to be highly imaginative and creative. It is these sorts of features that make us *persons* with tremendous intrinsic dignity and worth. We have been made in the likeness of a supremely valuable, self-aware, good, creative, free Being. The dignity of our personhood derives from God. As stated in America's Declaration of Independence: we have been "endowed" by our Creator "with certain unalienable rights."

Animal Souls

While beyond the scope of this article it should be obvious that animals also possess an immaterial nature, or soul of some type. Based on our direct awareness of our own inner lives, we should attribute to animals by analogy those states that are necessary to account for the animal's behavior, nothing more and nothing less.[15] For example, if a dog is stuck with a pin and a short time later it howls and holds up its paw, we are justified in attributing to the dog the same sort of state that happens in us just after such a stick and just prior to our own form of grimacing. The dog feels pain.

As we move down the animal chain to creatures that are increasingly unlike humans (e.g., from primates to earthworms), we are increasingly unjustified in ascribing a mental life to those animals. But it seems reasonable to suggest that most animals have certain sorts of sensations (e.g., experiences of taste and pain); desires (e.g., say a desire for food); intentions or willings (though nothing to suggest libertarian freedom); hold certain sorts of beliefs (e.g. that person can be trusted), and appear to *engage in thinking.*

As with humans, animals seem to demonstrate a mental life, that is irreducible to physical objects and processes.

The Question of the Mind/Body Interface

While just a rudimentary sketch of the soul's architecture, it leads naturally to the question of interface: how can something immaterial like the mind engage a physical body?

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15 For more on this, see Richard Swinburne, *The Evolution of the Soul* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, rev. ed., 1997), 11-16, 180-96, 200-19.

As we'll see shortly, *we often know that one thing causes another without having any idea of how it does so, especially when the two items are different.* A magnetic field can move a tack, gravity can act on a planet millions of miles away, protons exert a repulsive force on each other, and so forth. In these examples, we know *that* one thing can (or could) causally interact with another thing, even though we may have no idea *how* such interaction takes place.

In the case of mind and body, we are constantly aware of causation between them. Episodes in the body or brain (being stuck with a pin, having a head injury) can cause things in the soul (a feeling of pain, loss of memory), and the soul can cause things to happen in the body (worry can cause ulcers, one can freely and intentionally raise his arm). *We have such overwhelming evidence for causal interaction between soul and body that there is no sufficient reason to doubt it.*

Furthermore, it may even be that a "how" question regarding the interaction between mind and body cannot even arise. A question about how A causally interacts with B i*s actually a request for an intervening mechanism* between A and B that can be described. One can ask how turning the key starts a car because there is an intermediate electrical system between the key and the car's running engine that is the means by which turning the key causes the engine to start. The "how" question is a request to describe that intermediate mechanism. *But the interaction between mind and body may, and most likely is, direct and immediate.* There just *is* no intervening mechanism and, thus, a "how" question describing that mechanism does not even arise.

CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

It is time to summarize our argument. In chapter one, the mind/body problem was introduced, the important notions of substance, property and event were clarified, and an overview of physicalism and dualism was provided.

In chapter two, we looked at properties of mental states and showed them to be numerically distinct from physical properties of the brain. The arguments put forth were: the nature of introspection, the Knowledge argument, and the nature of intentionality.

In chapter three, evidence for substance dualism was presented. That case wove together four strands of evidence: (1) our basic awareness of the self as an unextended, immaterial, center of consciousness that owns its experiences and retains identity through change; (2) the first-person point of view and the existence of a unified, immaterial ego (or, "I") as its most reasonable ground; (3) the (modal) possibility of disembodied, non-physical existence as evidence that the self is not identical to the body; and (4) the soul as the most reasonable ground for the sort of freedom—libertarian freedom—necessary to make sense of morality, responsibility and punishment.

Finally, in chapter four, we looked at a basic sketch of the soul and addressed the question of how an immaterial soul could interface with a physical body. This has been the argument for dualism, but it's important to point out, it merely supports what human beings intuitively believe: that we are embodied souls.

SUGGESTED FURTHER READING

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Moreland, J. P., and Scott B. Rae. *Body & Soul.* Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2000. A biblical and philosophical defense of Thomistic dualism and its relationship to various ethical issues.

Swinburne, Richard. *The Evolution of the Soul.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, rev. ed., 1997. A renowned philosopher defends property and substance dualism and an argument for God's existence based on dualism.

Taliaferro, Charles. *Consciousness and the Mind of God.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. A leading dualist defends integrative dualism and applies it to our view of God and His relationship to the world.

Wiker, Benjamin. *Moral Darwinism: How We Became Hedonists.* Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2002. A philosopher explains how Darwinism has been tied to a broader attempt to advance physicalism in order to weaken belief in God and life after death and to advance hedonism in ethics.

Willard, Dallas. *Renovation of the Heart.* Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 2002. A philosopher presents an accessible, penetrating description of six aspects of being a human person, including a characterization of the soul, and analyzes how each aspect may be cultivated in Christian spiritual formation.

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J. P. Moreland is Distinguished Professor of philosophy at Talbot School of Theology, Biola University. He has authored, edited, or contributed papers to ninety-five books, including *Does God Exist?* (Prometheus), *Universals* (McGill-Queen's), *Consciousness and the Existence of God* (Routledge), *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology, The Blackwell Companion to Substance Dualism, and Debating Christian Theism* (Oxford.) He has also published over ninety articles in journals such as *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, American Philosophical Quarterly, Australasian Journal of Philosophy, MetaPhilosophy, Philosophia Christi, Religious Studies,* and *Faith and Philosophy*. Moreland was selected in August, 2016 by The Best Schools as one of the 50 most influential living philosophers in the world.

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