A Soft substance dualist:
An investigation and appraisal of
Richard Swinburne’s philosophy of mind

by

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# Table of Contents

Introduction: 4

Pure Mental Events: Sensations 8

Pure Mental Events: Thoughts 25

Pure Mental Events: Purposings (Intentions) 36

Pure Mental Events: Desires and Beliefs 45

  Desires 45

  Beliefs 50

Agent Causality 54

Personal Identity and Free Will 64

  Personal Identity 65

  Free Will 74

Appraisal 80

Bibliography: 90
Introduction:

The focus of Richard Swinburne’s philosophy of mind is the nature of human beings. Within this focus he is concerned with a specific issue – whether human beings can best be understood as complex organic machines, or as immaterial souls interacting with bodies.\(^1\) Swinburne believes that an analysis of the presence of consciousness in the world, and in particular the ability of human beings to freely will to actualise or suppress a desire, is persuasive evidence that human beings are souls interacting with bodies. As a scholar in the philosophy of mind Swinburne is, therefore, a substance dualist. This is a position that he affirms as his own.\(^2\)

As a substance dualist Swinburne claims that both Plato and Descartes thought that human beings consist of a body and a soul.\(^3\) As a substance dualist, then, Swinburne places himself in a tradition of thought that he identifies as having existed for three millennia.\(^4\) I mention this because Swinburne, to some extent, draws upon the thought of his predecessors in arguing for a substance dualist position. Thus, for example, when arguing that a person is a different substance to a body, he cites Descartes’ assertion that mind is a different substance from matter because it is indivisible, and matter is not.\(^5\)

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Although Swinburne sees his philosophy of mind as being in the line of a long tradition of dualist thought, he is also aware that it has been a very unfashionable doctrine in the philosophy of mind for many years. What has held sway in the field during those years, he claims, has been a strongly materialist stance that all conscious states are brain states. In my first chapter I will set out the forms of materialism that he identifies as having held dominant positions in the philosophy of mind for a number of years. I will also begin to set out the arguments he believes defeats these forms of materialism.

Despite the deterministic materialism that Swinburne holds to be currently predominant in the philosophy of mind, Swinburne believes that the arguments he advances in support of substance dualism have a great strength. It is a goal of his philosophy of mind, therefore, that these arguments should gain persuasive traction among other philosophers, scientists, and the educated public. Swinburne, therefore, is not concerned to simply repeat the arguments for substance dualism advanced, for example, by Descartes, but rather he is concerned to argue for that position in the modern scientific environment. This is why, at the outset of his philosophy of mind, he sets out what he claims are the principles of inductive inference used by scientists, and those principles upon which his philosophy will be based. It is also the reason why his discussion of mind/body interaction relies heavily upon his understanding of quantum physics.

In addition to setting out his arguments for substance dualism in a modern scientific and philosophic environment, Swinburne is also a philosopher of religion and has written a number of books and papers arguing for the existence of God. I mention this because the

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6 Swinburne, The Evolution of the Soul, xiii.
7 Swinburne, The Evolution of the Soul, ix.
arguments he advances to persuade his readers that human beings are immaterial conscious souls interacting with bodies, and that a person is capable of existing after the death of the material body, are also used in his religious books and papers to argue for the existence of God. Although my interest in this thesis is not to show how Swinburne uses these arguments in his religious philosophy, the reader will see how his account of agent causality, for example, could form part of an argument for the existence of God. This is a possibility that Swinburne acknowledges, and obviously thinks is a benefit.  

Swinburne’s supports substance dualism by arguing that mental events are not identical to brain events. His goal in arguing in this way is to establish the existence of an immaterial conscious substance that interacts with a material body. Once he has established to his satisfaction that there is such an immaterial conscious substance that affects the body with which it interacts, he sets out a view of the person and free will. My procedure in this thesis will be to set out the arguments that Swinburne advances to persuade his readers that particular mental events cannot be brain events, and are, therefore, the events of an immaterial substance. This outline will follow the format of Swinburne’s own argument as it is set out in *The Evolution of the Soul*. It will also give an account of the arguments in his later work, *Mind, Brain, and Free Will*. This later work, he believes, while affirming the conclusions in *The Evolution of the Soul*, deepens and strengthens the argumentation of the earlier work.  

It does this, Swinburne believes, by giving an account of how states of affairs can be metaphysically possible, and by giving a fuller account of free will than the account he gave in the earlier work. Moreover in the later work Swinburne sets out an argument for agent causality that claims to show how immaterial mental intentions can cause movements

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8 Swinburne, *The Evolution of the Soul*, xii.
in a material body. Having given an account of his arguments for the immateriality of mental events, I will then subject them to a critical evaluation. In particular, I will contend that his arguments for the immateriality of mental events could also be used to argue persuasively for what Swinburne calls ‘soft materialism’.\textsuperscript{11} Soft materialism, as Swinburne defines it, is the view that brains have mental properties as well as physical properties, and that the mental properties are caused by material brain events.\textsuperscript{12}

In the final chapter I will make an appraisal of Swinburne’s substance dualist position. I will contend that Swinburne’s arguments for substance dualism are not persuasive. I will argue that this is the case because his arguments for the claim that a human being consists of an immaterial ‘soul person’ interacting with a physical body are dependent on thought experiments that appeal to a notion that if something is conceivable, it is possible.\textsuperscript{13} I will argue that not everything we can conceive of is realistically possible, and that Swinburne’s thought experiments are vulnerable and methodologically defective. I will also contend that because Swinburne does not develop any concept of a functional connection between souls and bodies, it cannot be known if bodies, other than our own, have souls connected to them.

\textsuperscript{11} Swinburne, The Evolution of the Soul, 9.
\textsuperscript{12} Swinburne, The Evolution of the Soul, 9.
Pure Mental Events: Sensations

I have pointed out that Swinburne categorizes himself as a substance dualist in the tradition of Plato and Descartes. Swinburne, however, obviously articulates his version of substance dualism in a different age from that of Descartes. For this reason Swinburne is concerned to justify his version of substance dualism in a way that takes into account modern scientific theorizing as he understands it. Although he holds as true the evolutionary doctrine that human beings have evolved from apes, and apes, in turn, from more primitive animals, and primitive animals from inanimate atoms\(^1\), he also claims that what has evolved in their case is radically different from the inanimate material from which it has evolved:

…having a thought or a sensation or a purpose is not just having some physio-chemical event occur inside one of greater complexity than the physio-chemical events which occur in rock or rivers. It is not the same thing at all. The mental life of thought, sensation and purpose may be caused by physio-chemical events in the brain, but it is something quite different from those events…\(^2\)

What this difference in kind between consciousness and physical events indicates, according to Swinburne, is that there is a vast ontological difference between inanimate things and human beings. The difference is that humans have consciousness and things do not. Further, Swinburne holds that the most cursory reflection will show us that consciousness leads to a continuity of experience. What this continuity means, according to Swinburne, is that a person will have particular experiences today and have different experiences tomorrow. Part

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\(^1\) Swinburne, *The Evolution of the Soul*, 1.
of the content of a subject’s experiences tomorrow will be memories of what the subject experienced today. Swinburne uses this assertion about the continuity of conscious experience to argue that, although the continuity of experience may be dependent on the continuity of brain matter, the substance that is capable of having that experience is ontologically different to the kind of matter belonging to inanimate objects. Swinburne’s target here is what he calls ‘Mind-Brain Identity Theory’. I shall set out what Swinburne has to say about this theory shortly.

Swinburne also holds that self-reflection about our thoughts and feelings show us that our thoughts and feelings cause other thoughts and feelings that, because of the purposes we try to fulfil, affect our behaviour. For Swinburne it is a point about mind body interaction, and also a point about moral behaviour. Having indicated the ontological difference that he believes exists between human beings and inanimate things, Swinburne claims that the interaction between them has to be explained if we are to give a genuinely comprehensive account of the world and the things that are in it. Among the things that happen in the world, Swinburne claims, are immaterial mental events and material brain events.

From the outset of *The Evolution of the Soul*, and throughout his career, Swinburne develops his version of substance dualism in opposition to a materialism that he believes has been accepted as the orthodox position among practitioners in the philosophy of mind. The

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6 I use *The Evolution of the Soul* as Swinburne’s basic text because in his later work, *Mind, Brain, and Free Will*, he states that the conclusions he drew in *The Evolution of the Soul* remain the same. However, in *Mind, Brain, and Free Will*, Swinburne provides a more detailed discussion of mind body interaction than he did in *The Evolution of the Soul*. I will refer to his account of agent causality in *Mind, Brain, and Free Will* in my discussion of mind body interaction.
materialism that Swinburne is rejecting is what he designates as hard materialism on the one hand, and soft materialism on the other. Hard materialism, according to Swinburne’s account, claims that the only substances in the world are material substances with natural properties and events, and that people are material substances. Hard materialism also claims, according to Swinburne, that so-called mental events are the same as physical events.

Hard materialists, Swinburne asserts, divide into different schools. One school, behaviourism, holds that speech about mental events is really talk about what a person does and what she would do in other circumstances. Thus to have a toothache is “for me to hold my jaw, be bad tempered, arrange a dental appointment etc…” Another school of hard materialism, according to Swinburne, is known as mind-brain identity theory. Mind-brain identity theorists hold, according to Swinburne, that a statement that a person is feeling pain is a statement that does not reference a mental event but really means there are “nerve fibres firing in a certain pattern…” On this view having a pain is identical with having an active nerve state.

Swinburne holds that behaviourism and mind-brain identity theory are not the same. This is so because mind-brain identity theory is concerned with an analysis of what makes events identical or not; whether “an event described in one way is the same event as an event described in another way.” Behaviourism, on the other hand, holds that talk “about apparent

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9 I use the term ‘so-called’ to indicate that the behaviourist school of hard materialist reject the existence of mental events.
mental states is talk about the subject’s actual or hypothetical public behaviour…”\textsuperscript{15} The distinction that Swinburne is making will become clearer when I give an account of why he holds that sensations are mental events different from brain events.

Swinburne’s account of soft materialism, by contrast, acknowledges that there are mental events that are different from brain activity. Soft materialism, like hard materialism, holds that there are only material substances in the world. Thus, a person is the same thing as her body and what is called her mind is the same thing as her brain.\textsuperscript{16} Swinburne characterises soft materialism as follows:

\ldots persons (and their brains) have, as well as physical properties, also mental properties, such as feeling tired and having a visual sensation of such and such a colour and shape, whereas tables and chairs have only physical properties. Mental events – e.g. my having a pain now – are different from brain-events; they are not physical events. Brain-events cause mental events. (Neurones firing in certain patterns cause me to have a red after-image.)\textsuperscript{17}

Soft materialism, as Swinburne describes it, holds that the self is a bodily and, therefore, a material reality without denying that there are mental events.\textsuperscript{18} This means that the soft materialist identifies mental events with a material state. \textit{Prima facie}, what Swinburne calls soft materialism would seem to satisfy his project of showing how consciousness has evolved to interact with material bodies. This is the case because Swinburne holds that soft materialism could entertain the notion that mental events can cause brain events.\textsuperscript{19} However, although a soft materialist may allow this view, Swinburne claims that it is an inadequate

\textsuperscript{15} Swinburne, \textit{The Evolution of the Soul}, 8.
\textsuperscript{16} Swinburne, \textit{The Evolution of the Soul}, 9.
\textsuperscript{17} Swinburne, \textit{The Evolution of the Soul}, 9.
\textsuperscript{18} Swinburne, \textit{The Evolution of the Soul}, 9.
\textsuperscript{19} Swinburne, \textit{The Evolution of the Soul}, 9.
theory because, as I will show shortly, he holds that it does not allow for a proper account of the nature of persons.

Swinburne rejects both hard and soft forms of materialism on the ground that “knowledge of what happens to bodies and their parts will not show for certain what happens to persons.”

He characterises hard materialism as operating on the principle that if we could enumerate all the material things that exist and list their physical properties we would have explained everything in the world. Soft materialism operates on the principle that everything in the world would have been described if you could list what material things exist and list their physical properties, and the mental properties that are caused by the physical ones. Soft materialism also holds that there is no mental property that causes a bodily event, which is not also caused by some bodily property. Both materialisms hold, therefore, that while we may not be able to list all the material things in the world at this point in history, were we to do so, everything in the world would have been described.

Swinburne rejects both forms of materialism, not because they cannot yet list all material things, but on the grounds that, even if they could, it would still leave an observer ignorant as to whether a person lived a conscious life or not. This is the case, according to Swinburne, because “knowledge of what happens to bodies and their parts will not show you what happens to persons.” The point that Swinburne is making here is best understood when we are aware of his radical view of persons and embodiment, namely, his notion that the concept of a person does not have to entail the presence of a body. This is a strong claim that arises from Swinburne’s ontology of persons. His justification for this claim is based on a thought

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experiment about brain transplants. However, because this thought experiment is more fully developed in his account of personal identity, I will return to this claim in my discussion of his concept of personal identity. It suffices for now to say that his key argument against materialism is that knowledge of matter does not give knowledge of mental life. This argument is based on thought experiments. The argument, therefore, is only as good as the thought experiments, and the methodology of thought experiments.

Swinburne’s claim that what happens to material bodies will not give knowledge of what happens to persons is the major supporting argument for his substance dualism. Swinburne maintains that the essential part of a human is the soul because the mental events that happen to a man or woman do so because they happen in his or her soul.24 This is a substance dualism that he wants to distinguish from the dualism maintained by Descartes. Descartes held, according to Swinburne, that the soul would survive and function regardless of what happened to the body.25 Swinburne, however, holds that it is not possible to give a general account of the nature of the soul free of the body because under everyday conditions “the functioning of the soul requires the functioning of the body.”26 This is what Swinburne calls ‘soft dualism’, and it is the position he claims to be his own.27 Although Swinburne defines soft dualism in this way, it is important to note that in his analysis of personal identity he does conclude that the soul could persist without the body. This apparent ambivalence about possible disembodiment in his position is a matter I will consider further in my discussion of Swinburne’s account of personal identity.

24 Swinburne, The Evolution of the Soul, 10.
25 Swinburne, The Evolution of the Soul, 10.
26 Swinburne, The Evolution of the Soul, 10.
27 Swinburne, The Evolution of the Soul, 10.
It is appropriate to briefly point out that there is a problem with Swinburne’s account of soft materialism and soft dualism. On the face of it, it is difficult to see how Swinburne’s definition of soft dualism differs from soft materialism as he has defined it. This difficulty becomes more pressing when we realize that Swinburne freely acknowledges that mental events are caused by brain events:

To deny that some brain event caused by sticking a needle into someone causes pain seems absurd; and it seems equally absurd to deny that (in my sense) brain events are physical events, and pains are not. So the fact that we cannot explain how brain events cause conscious events casts no doubt on the obvious fact that sometimes they do.  

As noted above, Swinburne’s characterisation of soft dualism and soft materialism holds that mental events are caused by neuronal events. I have also noted that, according to Swinburne, the soft materialist can claim that the mental events caused by brain events can cause brain events. Swinburne holds, however, that mental events are properties of the immaterial soul substance. He also holds that mental events, as he define them, cause brain events. In view of Swinburne’s account of soft materialism it would seem, therefore, that we could reasonably draw the conclusion that causal interaction between mind and body is the same whether we operate with a model of a human consisting of two substances of mind and body, or with a model of a human being an aggregate of properties that are divided into mind and body. This is not, however, a conclusion that Swinburne would accept.

Swinburne would not accept the view that both soft materialism and soft dualism can account for mental causation. This is the case because he holds that a person is made up of two substances: a conscious soul and a body. To support this position and distinguish it from soft materialism, Swinburne’s strategy is to show that the things-in-consciousness – sensations,

beliefs, thoughts, intentions and desires – are mental events different from, and causally free from, both forms of materialism. For this strategy to be viable he also needs to show that mental events can cause brain events because otherwise he would not be able to claim that there is bidirectional interaction between mind and brain, and that not all mental events have their causal origin in bodily states, and that mental events can be the initiators of chains of causation. Swinburne argues that the things-in-consciousness are mental events different from both forms of materialism, and he also mounts a case to show that mental events can, and do, cause brain events. (This argument for mental “agent causation” is a crucial component of Swinburne’s philosophy of mind and he devotes a large amount of space in his books and published papers to the issue. I discuss the issue in my chapter on mind/body interaction).

Before I set out Swinburne’s arguments to show that mental events are different from materialism, a prior point about his conception of dualism, subjectivity, and evidence, needs reviewing in order to have to hand some basic principles he utilises throughout his arguments.

If human consciousness and what it causes are part of what constitutes the history of the world, as Swinburne believes it does, and if the contents of consciousness are not knowable with certainty, even in principle, by observing electro-chemical activity in the brain, how can a subject know what sensations, beliefs, desires, thoughts she is having? Moreover, how can other persons know what mental events the subject is experiencing? According to Swinburne, a subject can know what mental events she is having because she has private and privileged access to the things in her consciousness. Indeed, he states that having privileged access is

29 Swinburne, Mind, Brain, and Free Will, 72. The list of the things-in-consciousness does not change throughout Swinburne’s works but there is nothing significant in the order in which they are listed. Thus in The Evolution of the Soul they are listed sensations, thoughts, purposings, desires, and beliefs.
part of the definition of a mental event.\footnote{30} But, if this is the case, it means that the existence of mental events as a foundation for reliable knowledge of events that partly make up the history of the world depends on a subject being able to be certain, and unmistakeably accurate, about what they know they are feeling or thinking, and for others to be confident that the subject is accurate in her reports about what mental events she is having.

Swinburne sets out a number of what he calls ‘principles of inductive inference’ that he claims allow a subject to be confident in knowing what mental events they are having, and that enable other people to be confident that the subject is giving an accurate description of her mental events.\footnote{31} The first of these is the principle of credulity. This principle of credulity states that “in the absence of counter-evidence probably things are as they seem to be, ‘seem to be’, that is, in the epistemic sense.”\footnote{32} Swinburne claims that the principle of credulity is another way of saying that we rely on remembered experience to recognize things.\footnote{33} Thus, for example, a subject remembers the shape of a square and because of this is able to recognize a different object as square-shaped providing there is no counter evidence.

Swinburne claims that without this principle there can be no public knowledge at all. He also claims that it is a principle of being rational.\footnote{34} Thus, Swinburne claims that generally the rational person is the credulous person.\footnote{35} Swinburne does not, however, think that the principle of credulity always gives infallible knowledge of mental events.\footnote{36} One extreme case that Swinburne cites concerns reports that someone under the influence of the drug LSD may

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\item[31] Swinburne, \textit{The Evolution of the Soul}, 11.
\item[32] Swinburne, \textit{The Evolution of the Soul}, 11.
\item[33] Swinburne, \textit{The Evolution of the Soul}, 12
\item[34] Swinburne, \textit{The Existence of God}, 303.
\item[36] Swinburne, \textit{The Existence of God}, 311.
\end{footnotes}
make about the perceptions they are having.\textsuperscript{37} Often these reports can be judged to be mistaken because, according to Swinburne, experience over time has shown perceptual reports made by a person after taking LSD have proven to be false.

This limitation on the veracity of self-knowledge of mental events has, I think, serious consequences for Swinburne’s ability to give an accurate account of the history of the world that, as I noted above, he claims includes mental events. If, in a particular instance, a subject cannot be certain about what mental event she is having, then a doubt is raised as to whether she can be certain about any other mental event she is having unless the passage of time shows that her perception of the mental event is accurate by repeated public consensus. Furthermore, if doubts about some reports are possible, third parties could not be confident about reports that a subject may give of her mental states. In this situation neither party could rely on the principle of credulity for a full knowledge of the history of the world.

Swinburne is aware that the principle of credulity, as he has formulated it, is subject to disagreement from some philosophers.\textsuperscript{38} He does not discuss these objections at length, but goes on to assert that unless his version of the principle is affirmed, our belief that things are the way they seem would be subject to constant scepticism.\textsuperscript{39} It is possible, however, that although introspection may not give a subject certain knowledge about her mental events, this does not have to lead to scepticism. One understanding of how we achieve self-knowledge holds that we learn about our beliefs by “reflecting on the aspects of the world that our mental states are about.”\textsuperscript{40} This means that if a subject is asked whether she believes there

\textsuperscript{37} Swinburne, \textit{The Existence of God}, 311.
\textsuperscript{38} Swinburne, \textit{Mind, Brain, and Free Will}, 43.
\textsuperscript{39} Swinburne, \textit{Mind, Brain, and Free Will}, 44.
will be a third world war, she becomes aware of what she believes by looking at geopolitical realities and making an assessment of those realities.\textsuperscript{41} This view holds, therefore, that an accurate awareness of our thoughts and beliefs does not depend entirely on inner representations, but also involves the contribution of social and environmental factors.\textsuperscript{42} This view, of course, modifies Swinburne’s principle of credulity, but it does so in a way that does not have to lead to general scepticism.

A second principle of inductive inference is what Swinburne calls the principle of testimony. This principle holds that “individuals ought to believe the reports of others about how things seemed to them, and so that things were as they report…”\textsuperscript{43} This principle also means that if a great many people give similar reports about the mental events they are having, then the reports of an individual who claims to be having similar mental events are more credible. It seems natural to object to this principle by suggesting that there needs to be some conditions attached to it to deal with cases where subjects may be dishonest about the mental events they are having. Swinburne’s response, however, is to maintain that we should assume honesty until our experience shows that we cannot continue to assume that the subject is honest.\textsuperscript{44} A third principle of inductive inference according to Swinburne is the principle of charity. This principle holds that we can reliably assume that other people have the same kind of mental events that we have and are, therefore, conscious as we are.\textsuperscript{45}

The principle of testimony is subject to some telling objections. The principle assumes that a hearer should trust a speaker’s word. In other words, the hearer should impute authority to a

\textsuperscript{41} Schwitzgebel, “Introspection,” 2.3.4 Transparency.  
\textsuperscript{43} Swinburne, \textit{The Evolution of the Soul}, 13.  
\textsuperscript{44} Swinburne, \textit{The Evolution of the Soul}, 13.  
\textsuperscript{45} Swinburne, \textit{The Evolution of the Soul}, 15.
speaker.\textsuperscript{46} But do we actually have good reason to impute this authority to a speaker? We know that lying and deceiving are not uncommon activities. A subject can say that she is having a happy mental event when the opposite is the case. Knowing that a speaker may want to deceive us about her mental events, we customarily rely on background information to assess her testimony.\textsuperscript{47} If we know that she is experiencing tragic circumstances in her life, we may doubt her testimony as to her happiness. Furthermore, from an evolutionary perspective there seems to be no reason why a human needs to have necessarily accurate knowledge about all her mental events. This is the case because all that is required for the survival of the human organism would be an accurate enough knowledge of its environment in order to obtain food and reproduce. For these reasons, it seems to me that Swinburne’s principle of testimony as he formulates it cannot, without modification, be adopted as a reliable source of knowledge about the mental events of others.

Swinburne has set out these principles of inductive inference to show that it is possible to engage in public discussion about the mental events to which he believes a subject has privileged access, even if there is no in-principle third person direct access to them. Thus, the principles are designed to assure us that there are other minds similar to ours. But it is difficult to understand how this can be the case, even if it is assumed that all the participants in a discussion are honest. This is the case because, as Wittgenstein showed in his ‘beetle in a box’ thought experiment, that if private experience is really private it must mean, for example, that a subject cannot know if the experience that others describe as ‘pain’ is the


\textsuperscript{47} Adler, “Epistemological Problems of Testimony,” 2. Background Evidence and the Vulnerability Problem.
same experience that she intends when she uses the word ‘pain’ in her description.\textsuperscript{48} In view of these considerations, it seems to me that Swinburne’s inductive principle does not solve the problem of how we can know, with any surety, the thoughts that others may have. This is a criticism that is frequently levelled at substance dualism.\textsuperscript{49} I think it is a legitimate criticism.

As I have indicated, Swinburne believes that in laying out the principles of inductive inference he has shown how a public discussion about a subject’s private mental experiences can proceed. On the basis of this belief, he sets out to show that the things-in-consciousness (that is, sensations, thoughts, beliefs, desires and intentions), really exist as mental events to which a subject has privileged access, and are not just the physical events that constitute the public behaviour of a subject. He also sets out to show that mental events are not identical to electro-chemical activity in the brain. Nor are they identical to any other neurological event. I will discuss the mental events that he has listed as constituting consciousness. I will begin with his analysis of sensations, first, because that is where Swinburne begins his analysis and, secondly, because I think that his conclusion that sensations are pure mental events is questionable.

Swinburne opens his discussion about sensations by stating that many sensations are caused by physical stimuli in and around our bodies.\textsuperscript{50} At first reading, this statement could suggest that Swinburne is a soft materialist about sensations. This, however, would be a position he would reject. Swinburne is arguing that there are numerous sensory events that do not depend

\textsuperscript{50} Swinburne, \textit{The Evolution of the Soul}, 25.
on the presence of physical stimuli.\textsuperscript{51} If he can show that this is the case, he will have shown that there are sensations in the absence of stimuli, and that sensations are more than the public behaviour responses to various types of stimuli. In order to establish that these sensations are pure mental events Swinburne will also have to show that sensations are not the result of neurological production.

In order to support his contention that there are sensations in the absence of stimuli, Swinburne gives examples of experienced sensations that he claims show that a subject can experience while, at the same time, being aware that there no physical stimuli present to cause the sensations that are being experienced. To assess whether sensations devoid of physical stimuli do exist, I will consider the examples he gives. Swinburne holds that a subject can have a red image when she is not looking at a red object, or she can have a burning pain when nothing is burning her.\textsuperscript{52} Likewise, Swinburne states that we can have the sensation of the taste of honey when we are not eating honey. He proposes that when these sensory events occur the subject is not experiencing something external but is experiencing what is in her consciousness, and is accessible to her alone.\textsuperscript{53} Thus it is Swinburne’s position that sensations are in the subject’s consciousness.

In this part of his discussion about sensations Swinburne is concerned to undermine the behaviouristic version of hard materialism. To make his point Swinburne rehearses some puzzle cases. The inverted colour spectrum puzzle case postulates that what you call red objects, look to me to be the colour that you call blue and \textit{vice versa}. A subject will group objects that are similarly coloured in the same way that other people do under one colour

\textsuperscript{51} Swinburne, \textit{Mind, Brain, and Free Will}, 72.

\textsuperscript{52} Swinburne, \textit{The Evolution of the Soul}, 26.

\textsuperscript{53} Swinburne, \textit{The Evolution of the Soul}, 24.
concept. But the subject will be calling something red which produces in her something that the others would call blue.\textsuperscript{54} The conclusion drawn from this thought experiment is that any person observing the behaviour of the subject and the other people, would see the same behaviour without knowing that the two parties were having different sensations despite using the same labels. Swinburne states that the inverted colour spectrum case is actually unlikely to occur, but it could.\textsuperscript{55} Thus Swinburne believes that he has shown that sensations are mental states not reducible to observable public behaviour.

As noted, Swinburne claims that a subject can have the sensation of the taste of honey when she is not eating honey. A question that needs to be raised, however, is whether in this case such a subject is really just remembering the taste of honey. Although a great deal has been written about memory, I think it is the case that memory brings to mind experiences that are not happening now.\textsuperscript{56} If memory brings to mind a past experience this is not a sensation. If I remember being tackled in a football game in 1978, I do not experience, or have a reminiscence of, the pain I felt at that time. I noted that Swinburne claims that a subject can experience a sensation of burning pain when nothing is burning her. But surely this can be accounted for by redescription as a memory of a sensation.

I noted above Swinburne is not only concerned to undermine behaviourist version of materialism, but also identity theory as a form of materialism. This is the theory that mental events are reducible to physical brain events. If Swinburne is to attain his goal of showing that mental events are different in kind to material events, he must show that mental events

\textsuperscript{54} Swinburne, \textit{The Evolution of the Soul}, 30.
\textsuperscript{55} Swinburne, \textit{The Evolution of the Soul}, 43.
are not the same as physical reactions in the brain. The issue, to use one of Swinburne’s examples, is whether the sensation of a red image had by a subject is identical to certain groups of neurons firing in the brain? Swinburne addresses this issue by giving an account of property identity.

A property, he says, is picked out by a name or description. If A and B are the names of properties, and if the two names pick out the same property, then A and B are identical. One example that Swinburne gives of event identity is that the property that English speakers call ‘green’ is the same as that which French speakers call ‘vert’ and, therefore, ‘green’ is ‘vert’, and vice versa, because they all have the same properties. What this example shows, he claims, is that ‘green’ and ‘vert’ are identical because they describe the same property of ‘greenness’. In view of this finding, Swinburne’s question is whether the sensory properties possessed by a subject who has a sensation such as a red image are the same as brain properties such as having C-fibres firing? Swinburne argues that they are not because ‘feeling pain’ and ‘C-fibres firing’ pick out different properties. This is the case because the “criteria for being in pain are how the subject feels, and the criteria for brain and behavioural events are what anyone could perceive.”

What Swinburne is arguing for, then, is that a subject’s report about the sensation of feeling pain, and a report about C-fibres firing in the brain, are what he calls ‘informative designators’ of the “properties of being in pain and being in such-and-such a brain state….”

Swinburne defines an ‘informative designator’ as that which picks out a property “which is

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57 Swinburne, The Evolution of the Soul, 45.
58 Swinburne, The Evolution of the Soul, 47.
59 Swinburne, Mind, Brain, and Free Will, 70.
60 Swinburne, Mind, Brain, and Free Will, Additional Note F, 235.
‘present on the surface’….”61 Thus, to cite the example used by Swinburne, the property that the ‘informative designator’ picks out in a subject’s statement that she has a toothache, is the subjective property of her having a toothache, not some underlying property that science determines causes the toothache, such as tooth decay.62

Swinburne has argued, in opposition to what he designated as hard materialism, that there really are sensations that are non-material events. He has shown, I think, that the behaviourist form of hard materialism is fraught with difficulties. He has also argued that sensations are mental events that are not identical to neuronal activity in the brain. It seems to me, however, that there is a problem with Swinburne’s concept that sensations are in a subject’s consciousness. This problem appears when considering the example of the brain apparently locating pain in the area from which a limb has been amputated. Phantom pain suggests that the sharp division between sensations as mental events and brain events, as posited by Swinburne, may not be as clear cut as he suggests. Nor does Swinburne address the issue of whether a sensation can be best understood as a complex whole. That is to say, a sensation is made up of the stimuli and the act of sensing, which raises a question about whether a stimulus and sensing can exist apart from each other. Thus, for example, when I ‘see’ something in a dream what is the status of this ‘seeing’? Am I seeing with my eyes even though I am asleep, or do I see with my eyes and my brain’s sophisticated image-processing and representing system that can work without ocular input? I raise these issues because I believe that Swinburne’s analysis of sensations as being pure mental events is open to question because it may beg the question in that it may have the dualist notion of the mind built into it.

61 Swinburne, Mind, Brain, and Free Will, 68.
62 Swinburne, Mind, Brain, and Free Will, 68.
Swinburne, as I have shown, is concerned to argue that the contents of consciousness – sensations, thoughts, intentions, beliefs and desires – are pure mental events. I have set out the arguments that he offers to support the conclusion that sensations are pure mental events that cannot be reduced to behaviour, and also that they are not identical to brain events. I will now set out the line of reasoning he gives to support his conclusion that thoughts are also pure mental events.

Swinburne defines thought as a “datable occurrent thought of which one is aware, that comes ‘into one’s mind’, that something is so.”\(^1\) Occurrent thoughts are, therefore, passive thoughts in that they occur to a person unexpectedly and are not brought on by a subject who intentionally thinks about something.\(^2\) A subject who does engage in intentionally thinking about a particular matter does this, according to Swinburne, in the hope that passive new and unexpected thoughts will occur to her.\(^3\) This would seem to suggest that thoughts cannot be modified by the will, but we can start the process of passively thinking. Swinburne also holds that occurrent thoughts, unlike sensations, have a propositional content.\(^4\) This means that occurrent thoughts can be put into a language.\(^5\) What Swinburne means is that if someone were to say to a subject ‘today is Friday’ this may cause a subject to have an occurrent thought that today is Friday, and that the content of this thought can be put into words.

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\(^1\) Swinburne, *Mind, Brain, and Free Will*, 78.
\(^3\) Swinburne, *The Evolution of the Soul*, 64.
According to Swinburne, then, occurrent thoughts are, by definition, something of which a subject is aware.\textsuperscript{6}

Swinburne further develops his definition of occurrent thoughts as thoughts that come into our mind and are events of which we become conscious by distinguishing occurrent thoughts from two situations in which, he claims, we inaccurately attribute occurrent thinking to a subject. What Swinburne is concerned to do is, on the one hand, to distinguish occurrent thought from belief. Thus I may say of a subject “she thinks Tony Abbott is Prime Minister of Australia.” But what I am really asserting in this sentence, Swinburne holds, is that the subject \textit{believes} Abbott is Prime Minister even though the subject may, at the time I make the statement, have no occurrent thought that he is Prime Minister.\textsuperscript{7} Thus in this use of language belief is mistaken for occurrent thought. Additionally Swinburne wants to distinguish occurrent thought from situations in which the phrase “x is thinking ….” is sometimes used to describe a subject’s observable behaviour. Someone may say, in observing a subject’s behaviour, that “x has her mind on the job”, meaning that she is thinking about the task she is performing. Swinburne’s claim is that when we do this we are only describing the successful performance of a task and have no knowledge of any occurrent thoughts of which the subject may be conscious.\textsuperscript{8} Swinburne makes this claim in order to fend off the behaviourist argument that will claim that it is possible to know what a subject is thinking by observing what she does with such accuracy that the behaviour constitutes, or is an adequate proxy for, descriptions of an inner life.

\textsuperscript{6} Swinburne, \textit{The Evolution of the Soul}, 65.
\textsuperscript{7} Swinburne, \textit{The Evolution of the Soul}, 63.
\textsuperscript{8} Swinburne, \textit{The Evolution of the Soul}, 63.
Having defined thought as passive, occurrent and propositional, Swinburne claims that a subject has, as he has argued about sensations, privileged access to her thoughts.\(^9\) Furthermore Swinburne holds that the subject has infallible knowledge of the contents of her thoughts.\(^10\) This is the case because even if third parties could discover what a subject is thinking by observing her behaviour, the subject would still know better than the third parties what she was thinking because she was doing the thinking. Swinburne holds that because it is the subject that is doing the thinking, her belief about the content of the thought is true, and that this belief cannot be subject to further analysis.\(^11\)

However the claim that what a subject believes are the contents of her thoughts is always true, is subject, according to Swinburne, to two qualifications.\(^12\) The first qualification is where a subject has a belief that she has a thought, but represses that belief from her consciousness so that it becomes subconscious in the sense that she refuses to admit to herself that she had the thought.\(^13\) Swinburne, citing some psychological studies, (e.g. Fingarette 1969), states that repression is the refusal of a subject to set out to herself in thought what she is aware of.\(^14\) What Swinburne is claiming here, then, is that even if a subject represses a thought into the subconscious, she is not unaware of the thought.\(^15\) But if this is the case then it would seem, on Swinburne’s own definition of thought, that the subject must still have infallible knowledge of her repressed thought. This is a strange implication of the position that I will discuss shortly.

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\(^9\) Swinburne, “Thought,” 158.
\(^10\) Swinburne, “Thought,” 158.
\(^12\) Swinburne, “Thought,” 159.
\(^13\) Swinburne, “Thought,” 159.
\(^14\) Swinburne, The Evolution of the Soul, 293. Swinburne uses the phrase ‘aware of’ but does explain the phrase in more detail.
\(^15\) Swinburne, “Thought.” 159.
The second qualification that “guards”\textsuperscript{16} the doctrine that a subject’s belief about the content of her thought is necessarily true concerns a situation where a subject puts her thought into words, but the chosen words give a wrong description of the content of the thought. A subject may report that the content of a thought she has is that X is famous, to use one of Swinburne’s examples, by saying that X is notorious. According to Swinburne this example shows that the subject has confused the meaning of the words ‘famous’ and ‘notorious’. But the example does not show, according to Swinburne, that the subject is wrong about the content of her thought that X is famous. This is the case, he claims, because when the subject is instructed in the meaning of the words she will redescribe the content of her thought using the right word.\textsuperscript{17} The accuracy of the subject’s knowledge of the content of her thought has not changed; she always had the thought that X is famous. All that has changed is that the subject now knows better how to express the thought in language.\textsuperscript{18} Swinburne concludes, therefore, that a subject’s infallible belief about the content of her thought is not proven to be fallible because she describes it with the wrong word.

At this point in my report of Swinburne’s account of thoughts, it is appropriate to point to some matters that are critical of Swinburne’s doctrine that a subject has true knowledge of the contents of her thoughts. The first matter concerns his introduction of the subconscious. In introducing this concept Swinburne seems to suggest that there are two kinds of ‘awareness’. There are thoughts that have a content the thinking subject can explicitly set out to herself. Then there are thoughts that have been repressed into a subconscious state. Swinburne, then, seems to be implying that a subject can have conscious thoughts and subconscious thoughts. Furthermore, he claims that subconscious thoughts can give rise to intentional action, but

\textsuperscript{16} Swinburne, “Thought,” 159. It is not clear what the word ‘guards’ means in this context but it is the word that Swinburne uses.

\textsuperscript{17} Swinburne, “Thought,” 160.

\textsuperscript{18} Swinburne, “Thought,” 160.
intentional action that a subject would not acknowledge as her purpose.\textsuperscript{19} (To support this contention Swinburne cites Freud’s lectures on psychoanalysis).\textsuperscript{20} But surely this means that a subject cannot know the totality of her thoughts with any accuracy at all, let alone infallibly. Nor would the subject know with accuracy her purposes and intentions. Moreover, the subject would act in certain ways without knowing why she acted in such a manner. The problem arises because Swinburne does not spell what it means to be ‘aware’ of a repressed belief that a subject will not spell out in thought due to repression in contrast to spelling something out in her conscious thought. What Swinburne needs to do is to describe a connection between the unconscious and the conscious. One straightforward possibility could be to argue, as Searle does, that the unconscious is logically connected to the conscious in that it is capable of becoming conscious.\textsuperscript{21} If this were the case it would mean that the unconscious consists of latent thought, and that all thought is, in principle, consciously accessible.

A second issue arises from Swinburne’s example of a subject who confuses the words ‘notorious’ and ‘famous’ in describing a particular person. Swinburne claims that when the meaning of the words are explained to the subject she will choose to use the word ‘famous’ rather than ‘notorious’ in describing the person. The subject’s choice will show, he claims, that she always knew, although she was unable to use the correct word, the real content of her thought. The question that this assertion evokes is one about the relationship between speech and thought. Swinburne addresses this relationship: He asserts that it is when a subject repeats sentences that are uttered by others she comes to think the thoughts that those

\textsuperscript{19} Swinburne, \textit{The Evolution of the Soul}, 294.


sentences express.\textsuperscript{22} The conclusion that Swinburne draws from this assertion is that “we can only have thoughts which are initially fairly close to our ability to express them in language or practice.”\textsuperscript{23} Swinburne uses the word ‘initially’ in this citation because he claims that once a language gives us thoughts of various kinds, it is possible we will forget, or no longer need, the words that enable the thought to be expressed.\textsuperscript{24} But even if having a thought that is unconnected to any word is actually possible, it does not change my objection that the subject who used the word ‘notorious, really meant that the person was notorious. This is the case because, in Swinburne’s example, the thought was always connected to a word. Furthermore, the relation that Swinburne establishes between speech and thought would seem to support the view that third parties can know what thought a subject is having by attending to her words. But if this were so it means that thoughts are not purely private mental events to which a subject has privileged access.

Swinburne believes that his arguments have established that a subject has infallible knowledge of her occurrent thoughts. However to establish that thoughts are pure mental events he also needs to show that third persons cannot know a subject’s thoughts by observing their behaviour. Furthermore he has to show that thoughts are not identical to brain events. In his discussion of thoughts Swinburne does not adduce arguments to show that thoughts are not identical to brain events. He simply asserts that the arguments he advanced to claim that sensations are not identical to brain events apply equally to thoughts.\textsuperscript{25} On the other hand Swinburne is particularly concerned to show that thought cannot be analysed in

\textsuperscript{22} Swinburne, “Thought,” 168.
\textsuperscript{23} Swinburne, “Thought,” 169.
\textsuperscript{24} Swinburne, “Thought,” 169.
\textsuperscript{25} Swinburne, “Thought,” 160.
terms of sensations. This is the case because he believes that it may be superficially plausible to try and analyse thought in terms of other mental events such as sensations.

At first sight it is difficult to see why it is so important to Swinburne that he argue that thoughts cannot be analysed in terms of sensations given that he claims that they are both pure mental events, and it is this that he is trying to establish. However the reason why he needs to show that thoughts are not analysable in terms of sensations becomes clear when it is understood that among sensations Swinburne counts the “imagining of sounds or sights which a man conjures up or which occur to him spontaneously.” This could mean that when a subject expresses a thought in words, the words she uses give auditory images by which the expressed thought could be analysed. It would plausibly follow, if this is the case, because words are public events, and because thought could be analysed in terms of sensations of auditory images caused by words, an observer might be able to know what thought a subject was thinking if the observer heard the words in which the subject expressed the thought. But this would violate Swinburne’s doctrine of privileged access to mental events by allowing a sort of mediated behaviourism.

The point that Swinburne is concerned to make is that the thought that a subject may be having is not determined by the sensible images caused by words. To support this contention Swinburne gives a number of examples. The first concerns Christians in the Middle Ages who heard the mass said in Latin. The Latin words, he claims, passed through

26 Swinburne, “Thought,”161.
28 Swinburne, The Evolution of the Soul, 71.
the minds of the hearers but because they did not understand Latin, the words did not cause the occurrence of a thought to a subject.29

Swinburne further argues that even if the language in which the words are expressed is understood, this does not guarantee that the sensory image that the words cause will determine the content of a thought. To illustrate this contention Swinburne argues, for example, that the words ‘you are old’ may occur to a subject. These words, he argues, may cause an image of a person with grey hair, or a person with wrinkled skin. But although the words may cause a sensory image this image does not exhaust the content of the thought. The subject may be thinking that she is old, or that someone she has seen is old, or even that the words ‘you are old’ are part of a conversation the subject imagines she is having with her father. Swinburne argues, therefore, that the auditory image does not determine the content of a thought, but that rather the thought determines to whom the auditory image refers.30

This position leads Swinburne to make a distinction between the public meaning of words and the private meaning of words. He states that the “public meaning of a sentence is a public matter and there are public criteria for determining what it is.”31 On the other hand he claims that the words a subject says to herself are private, and that the meaning of the words are “whatever the subject supposes it to be.”32 The fact that others might understand the words differently to the meaning understood by the subject is, Swinburne holds, irrelevant.33 Swinburne holds, then, that thought is a matter of private meaning regardless of the

29 Swinburne, *The Evolution of the Soul*, 70.
32 Swinburne, “Thought,” 166.
33 Swinburne, “Thought,” 166.
conventions of public language. I think that the position that Swinburne defends here is not tenable and I will return to the matter shortly.

Swinburne maintains, as I have shown, that thoughts cannot be analysed in terms of the sensory auditory images that he holds words can produce. As a consequence of this position Swinburne raises the question as to whether human beings need imaged words as vehicles for thoughts at all. Swinburne holds that a subject can have a thought without any words to express that thought. In support of this view he cites the Würzburg psychologists in the first decade of the twentieth century who apparently showed that subjects had thoughts unmediated by sensations. Swinburne also claims that there he is aware of reports of people who learn the meaning of words later in life, but who claim to have had thoughts earlier in their lives. An additional support for this contention, Swinburne claims, is that animals behave in ways that suggest that they have had a thought even though they have no language.

Swinburne claims, as I have shown, that the words a subject uses to express a thought have a private meaning regardless of the grammatical conventions that determine the public meaning of words. What this claim amounts to, as Wittgenstein has shown, is that when I say the sky is blue I am telling others that it is the colour that everyone knows as blue, but also that I am telling myself that the word blue refers to some internal visual impression I have of the colour blue. It is like saying “I know how the colour blue looks to me.” This is a position that Wittgenstein criticises because how can a word be intelligible if it means two things at once?

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34 Swinburne, The Evolution of the Soul, 76.
35 Swinburne, The Evolution of the Soul, 77.
38 Swinburne, The Evolution of the Soul, 73.
39 Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, § 278, 96°
It seems to me that Wittgenstein is correct in pointing out that in the everyday usage of language if I do say to myself that the sky is blue it does not occur to me that the impression of the colour blue is only a private impression of mine; my private thoughts are expressed in terms of public-language concepts.\textsuperscript{40} I simply assume that when I say the sky is blue I am providing information that anyone who has learnt a public language will understand.

I would also contend that when Swinburne claims that the words a subject uses to express a thought have a private meaning, he is contradicting his account of how we come to think the thoughts we do think. I referred earlier to his claim that we learn a language by uttering and coming to understand sentences that have a public meaning, and, that as we do this, we acquire the ability to have the thoughts that can be expressed by the sentences. But, if this is the way we learn to think in practice, as Swinburne claims,\textsuperscript{41} it seems to make no sense to claim that the words used to express a thought can have a private meaning. To try to retrieve the position that thoughts can have a private meaning by claiming, as Swinburne does, that a subject can forget all of the public words by which she learnt to express those thoughts, and yet still have the thought, seems far-fetched.\textsuperscript{42}

I think it is a weakness of Swinburne’s arguments for the status of thoughts as pure mental events, that some of his arguments could be applied to undermine his assertion that sensations are pure mental events to which subjects have privileged access. This is the case because public access is possible through the use of public words, and because the private realm is partly ‘built’ from public materials. I am referring in particular to his argument that thoughts cannot be analysed in terms of any auditory sensations that the uttering of words cause. His

\textsuperscript{40} Wittgenstein, \textit{Philosophical Investigations}, § 275, 96

\textsuperscript{41} Swinburne, “Thought,” 169.

\textsuperscript{42} Swinburne, “Thought,” 169.
arguments about sensation could be undermined because, in linking sensations to public words, he seems to open up the possibility that observers are able to decipher what sensations a subject is experiencing by hearing the words that the subject uses to express her thought. But, if this is the case, then sensations could not be pure mental events to which a subject has privileged access.

Swinburne has been concerned to show that thoughts are pure mental events to which a person thinking those thought has privileged access. My criticisms of his position have shown that the cost of trying to maintain this position are the adoption of contradictory positions on the nature of language and the undermining of the social intelligibility of language. I think that these problems arise because his philosophy of mind does not take seriously enough the social reality that characterizes human life. In one sense Swinburne raises, but does not discuss, the possibility of collective thought as it might be constituted by language.
Pure Mental Events: Purposings (Intentions)

As well as sensations and thoughts, Swinburne holds that what he calls ‘purposings’ are pure mental events of which a subject is conscious.\(^1\) ‘Purposing’, he claims, is a technical term that needs to be carefully defined. He undertakes this definitional task by first giving an account of what he calls intentional action.

An intentional action is, according to Swinburne, “something that an agent does, meaning to do it.”\(^2\) Most intentional actions, he states, are actions that bring about the movement of bodily parts. However there are, he claims, intentional acts that also bring about mental events.\(^3\) What Swinburne means by this is that a subject can have the intention of doing a calculation and then perform, in her mind, the intended sequence of mental arithmetic.\(^4\)

Although Swinburne asserts that there are two kinds of intentional events, he is of the view that what can be said about one can be said about the other.\(^5\) The intentional events that Swinburne chooses to discuss are those that bring about the movement of a subject’s body parts.

Swinburne holds that a grouping of bodily movements can be described as achieving a subject’s intention if all significant movements can be encompassed in the one description. What he means is that when a subject decides to ride a bicycle she performs a whole lot of actions that are not individually consciously intended. As the subject rides, she is not aware

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\(^1\) Swinburne, *The Evolution of the Soul*, 85.
\(^3\) Swinburne, *Mind, Brain, and Free Will*, 80.
that her body is making subtle adjustments that keep her balanced on the bicycle, and as a consequence, these unconscious subtle adjustments enable her to travel to her destination. However despite this Swinburne holds that these bodily adjustments can be described as intentional because they are a means to an end under the overall intention of the subject to ride to her intended destination. Swinburne’s assertion that an intentional action includes many actions that are not individually intended is an important component, as I will shortly show, in the way he distinguishes volitions from purposings.

Having described intentional action as bringing about bodily movements and mental events, Swinburne moves towards a more exact definition of purposing by introducing the notion of causality. Bringing something about is, he states, really about causing something to happen. Swinburne gives a brief account of causality which states that it is because a substance is in a particular state that it causes events of another kind to happen. Thus, for example, when it is said that the sun melts ice, what is meant is that the sun causes the ice to melt because the state of the sun is that it is hot. Having asserted that it is because a substance is in a particular state that it causes other events to occur, Swinburne is concerned to ask about the state of a subject who intentionally brings about bodily movements and mental events. He is concerned to do this because he will argue that intentional bringing about is a kind of cause.

According to Swinburne philosophers have given two alternative accounts about the state of a subject who intentionally brings about bodily movements. The first account is that the state of an agent who intentionally brings about an event is that the subject is in a state of desire. This

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7 Swinburne, *The Evolution of the Soul*, 89.
8 Swinburne, *The Evolution of the Soul*, 90. Swinburne discusses causality in greater depth when he outlines his theory of agent causality in relation to how immaterial mental events can cause bodily events. I will discuss his view of agent causality in a separate chapter.
state of desire will issue in an intentional action if the agent has a belief that the desire will be accomplished by the doing of a certain action.\textsuperscript{9} Thus this account assumes that the action of intentionally killing a person, for example, consists of a desire to kill the person, and the belief that firing a loaded gun that is aimed at the person’s head will kill the person.\textsuperscript{10}

Swinburne advances two objections to this contention that an intentional action is caused by an agent who is in the state of desiring something to happen with an apt belief. The first objection is that a state of desire can cause an event without a subject having any intention to make the event occur. In support of this contention Swinburne cites an example taken from Donald Davidson. A climber in a dangerous situation may want to rid herself of holding another person of holding another person on the rope. This desire might so unnerve the subject that she let the rope go without ever intentionally choosing to do.\textsuperscript{11} The point that Swinburne is arguing for is that there is more to intentional action than desire having effects.

Swinburne also holds that it is not necessary for a subject to have a desire in order for an intentional action to take place. Being in a state of desire is not, therefore, a necessary condition for an event to happen, but having a desire is a sufficient condition for action to occur.\textsuperscript{12} Swinburne argues that a subject might intentionally do something without having any desire to do the action. Swinburne illustrates this claim by stating that a subject might, for example, repay a debt out of a sense of duty and not because she has any desire to repay the loan.\textsuperscript{13} Swinburne also claims that a subject can be in a situation where two actions are genuine possibilities – let us say the taking of either one or another of two possible routes.

\textsuperscript{9} Swinburne, \textit{The Evolution of the Soul}, 90.
\textsuperscript{10} Swinburne, \textit{The Evolution of the Soul}, 90.
\textsuperscript{11} Swinburne, \textit{The Evolution of the Soul}, 91.
\textsuperscript{12} Swinburne, \textit{The Evolution of the Soul}, 91.
\textsuperscript{13} Swinburne, \textit{The Evolution of the Soul}, 91.
home from her place of work. The subject has no particular desire for either route and is, therefore, indifferent to which route to take. Swinburne’s point is that what the subject decided in this situation, even if it is by a toss of a coin, will be an intentional action that is not dependent on the subject being in a state of desire. The general point he is making by these examples is that desire/belief is a wide theory of motivation, but it does not override the need for a specific purpose to be formed in order for a physical event to occur.

Swinburne rejects the thesis that intentional action is caused by an agent who is in the state of desiring something because, he claims, desires are passive states. What he means by this is that the notion of desire “suggests something involuntary, not subject to the agent’s control.” As involuntary, and not always subject to a subject’s control, the actions caused by desires cannot, by definition, be intentional. This is the case because, as I have shown above, Swinburne holds that an intentional action is something over which an agent has control.

An alternative account that philosophers have given about the state of a subject who intentionally brings about bodily movements, Swinburne claims, is that a subject who intentionally brings about the happening of an event is in a state of willing something to happen. This willing to cause something to happen is, Swinburne reports, usually called a volition, or act of the will. Swinburne holds that what is usually called a volition is something that a subject notices when she tries to do something, such as move her arm, but is unable to get the arm to move because it is externally constrained in some way. What a

15 Swinburne, “The Indeterminism of Human Actions,” 433.
subject notices when she tries to move her arm and cannot is, Swinburne holds, what philosophers have called the volition to move the arm even though it does not move.

Swinburne states that he is in agreement with volition theory in as much as it maintains that intentional events involve a conscious effort by a subject to cause parts of her body to move.\textsuperscript{18} However Swinburne believes that the way volition theorists explain the relationship between the volitional state and the intentional action it causes is inadequate. It is inadequate because the way volitional theory has often been developed, he claims, suggests that there is an individual act of will for all the actions that constitute an intentional action.\textsuperscript{19} Swinburne holds that this is a problem because when a subject acts intentionally, say in walking from her home to her place of work, that intention to walk from her home to her work involves a whole lot of other events that she does without forming a volition to do that particular action. Thus in walking from her home to her place of work the subject does not have a particular volition to make each particular step. But each particular step can be said to be intentional because it is part of the subject’s overall intention to walk from her home to her place of work. The point that Swinburne is making is that it is what he calls the larger intention of a subject to walk to work that guides the movements of her body for the duration of the walk. It is this general intention that Swinburne calls a purposing.\textsuperscript{20} So the account that Swinburne gives of the state of a subject who intentionally brings about bodily movements and mental events, is that it is the state of purposing to pursue some aim or goal.\textsuperscript{21}

Purposings, Swinburne maintains, are mental events. As mental events they are events to which a subject has privileged access. Swinburne also holds that a subject has infallible

\textsuperscript{18} Swinburne, \textit{The Evolution of the Soul}, 93.  
\textsuperscript{19} Swinburne, \textit{The Evolution of the Soul}, 94.  
\textsuperscript{20} Swinburne, \textit{The Evolution of the Soul}, 96.  
\textsuperscript{21} Swinburne, \textit{The Evolution of the Soul}, 96.
knowledge of what she is purposing. Swinburne states that observers often claim to be able to know what a subject’s purpose is by observing her behaviour. However Swinburne holds that a subject knows her purposes in the performance of an action better than any observer who is making inferences about her purposes from observing her behaviour. The subject knows what she is purposing better than any observer of the intentional bodily movements she causes because she is conscious of what she is trying to do. No observer can be aware of a subject’s purposing in the way that the subject can because, from the perspective of the observer of the subject’s bodily movements, there could be any number of purposings that might be operating to bring about the observed movements. Thus, for example, to explain an observation of a subject carrying an umbrella on a fine sunny day an observer could construct a number of hypotheses of what the subject is purposing. The subject may think it is going to rain, she may be going to use the umbrella to protect herself from the heat of the sun, or she may be deliberately carrying an open umbrella on a sunny day to draw attention to herself. What Swinburne wants to show with arguments like these is that purposings, like those he has argued for in relation to sensations and thoughts, cannot be eliminated by behaviourist accounts of intention.

I have shown that Swinburne holds that mental events cannot be reduced to brain events. In order to argue that purposings are not identical to brain events Swinburne invokes what he calls the ‘principle of simplicity’. In explicating this principle of simplicity Swinburne argues that it is possible to postulate many theories to explain a set of data. These theories may postulate, he states, that there are “unobservable substances and properties that bring

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about observable events…”27 The simplest theory, and the theory that Swinburne believes is to be preferred, is one that he states will postulate fewer substances to cause an event.28 The principle of simplicity comes into play, Swinburne holds, when it is postulated that purposings are identical to brain events. The hypothesis that purposings are identical to brain events would, Swinburne maintains, be a very complex one because:

…it would involve postulating that a brain-event which has, as it were, no description of a bodily movement, say the movement of my hand, built into it, can cause both the purposing to move my hand and the movement of the hand. But the issue is whether in the absence of evidence that the situation is like that, it is reasonable to suppose that it is – when there is such an evident plausible rival hypothesis.29

The point that Swinburne is making is that to hold that a brain-event causes my hand to move involves postulating two causes; the brain-event causes the purposing to move my hand, and causes the hand to move.30

The plausible rival hypothesis to which Swinburne refers, and which appears to be his own, is that, in normal circumstances, “a purposing that X occur is followed by the occurrence of X.”31 Swinburne’s argument is that a purposing, in contrast to a brain event, has built into it the notion that a body movement should occur, and this causes the body movement. We are able, according to Swinburne, to hold that a purposing has the notion of a body movement built into it because of our experience of a regular and usually invariable correlation between

purposing and occurrence. Because this hypothesis involves the postulation of only one cause and is, therefore, the simpler hypothesis, it is, according to Swinburne, to be preferred.

In this chapter I have shown how Swinburne arrives at his notion that what he calls ‘purposings’ are pure mental events that cause movements of the body and produce mental images. The issue of how a non-material substance, if there is such an entity, can cause movement in a material substance is a matter concerning mind body interaction that I will take up in a later chapter. There is, however, another explanation of intentionality that Swinburne does not take into account. This is externalism that holds that the content of a subject’s thoughts and, therefore her intentions, are influenced by the context she is in, or more accurately that they are fixed by that context. It seems to me that experience shows us that there is something to be said for this position, or, at least, that intentionality is a mixture of intrinsic and extrinsic influences. In making this point I would endorse Burge’s view that individualistic accounts of intentionality like Swinburne’s, and those of other philosophers, are inadequate because they:

… seek to see a person’s intentional mental phenomena ultimately and purely in terms of what happens to the person, what occurs within him, and how he responds to his physical environment, without any reference to the social context in which he or the interpreter of his mental phenomena are situated.

What externalism shows us, I think, is that because we are social beings living in communities that fix our intentions to an extent, we are also able to discern the intentions of others. Jaworski, for example, claims that psychological studies have shown (Tomasello

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2008) that infants learn to do this by imitating the goal directed activity of adults.\textsuperscript{36} Although externalism does not endorse or amount to behaviourism it is not, however, a position that Swinburne could embrace. This is the case because it cuts off the privileged access to, and independent characterisation of the inner life that Swinburne needs to argue for his dualism.

Pure Mental Events: Desires and Beliefs

I have set out the arguments that Swinburne uses to support his contention that sensations, thoughts and intentions are pure mental events to which a subject has privileged access. As well as being pure mental events, beliefs and desires are, he holds, involuntary in that they happen to a person, and are not something that she does.¹ Because they are pure mental events Swinburne contends that desires and beliefs are pure mental events not able to be eliminated by behaviourism or reduced to brain events.

Desires

A desire, according to Swinburne, is a want or an inclination to “do actions of a certain kind or to be in a certain situation.”² However, he holds that desires are not only inclinations to do certain things, but they are inclinations to do the things desired by forming intentions to do the actions.³ Swinburne defines desires in this way because he wants to contrast his own understanding of the connection between desires and actions with the understanding of the connection that he claims is dominant in modern philosophy of mind.⁴ Contemporary philosophy of mind claims, he holds, that all actions involve desires of some kind and lead “a man to suppose that he can no more help doing what he does than he can help his desires.”⁵

In making this distinction between actions and desires Swinburne, as I will show, is arguing

¹ Swinburne, Mind, Brain, and Free Will, 77.
² Swinburne, Mind, Brain, and Free Will, 83.
³ Swinburne, Mind, Brain, and Free Will, 83.
⁵ Swinburne, “Desire,” 429
against ‘action-based’ theories of desire, and arguing for ‘good-based’ theories of desire. He is also making a point about moral responsibility; but this is a matter that will not concern us here.

Because desires are inclinations to do something that arises in a subject, they are according to Swinburne, involuntary urges we find in ourselves. He also suggests that desires exist even when a subject is not conscious of them. I note this point about non-conscious desires because he states that a subject can become aware of her desires by choosing to introspect. The claim that a subject becomes aware of her desires when she chooses to introspect is important to Swinburne because this way of learning about her desires shows that desires are mental events that cannot be analysed in terms of physical events. This is the case, he argues, because whatever ways third persons may have of learning about the desires of a subject, the subject has a different way of knowing, namely by way of her introspective awareness of her inclinations.

At this point in my analysis of Swinburne’s account of desire, it is apposite to raise again the question as to whether a subject’s introspection is always successful and accurate. A subject’s introspection about her desires may not, Swinburne holds, always be successful. He states that it is sometimes the case that a subject needs the help of others when introspecting about her desires. An example of others extending this help to the subject is the case where the subject always chooses even numbers when she buys a lottery ticket but is unaware that she

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8 Swinburne, *Mind, Brain, and Free Will*, 83.

9 Swinburne, *Mind, Brain, and Free Will*, 84.

10 Swinburne, *Mind, Brain, and Free Will*, 84.

always does this. This action of the subject, however, can be observed by others who are able to conclude that she has an unrecognized desire to choose even numbers. They are then able to give this information to the subject.\textsuperscript{12} But, if others are able to deduce the desires of the subject from their observation of her behaviour when she is not aware of them, then it would seem that Swinburne’s assertion that desires are pure mental events to which a subject has privileged access is compromised.

In stressing that a subject becomes aware of her desires by introspection, Swinburne, as I stated above, is rejecting action-based theories of desire which hold that “for an organism to desire \( p \) is for the organism to be disposed to take whatever action it believes are likely to bring about \( p \)”\textsuperscript{13} These are behaviourist theories that hold that when a subject does an action we can impute that she has a desire to do it. When the behaviourist position is stated in this restrictive way I think Swinburne is correct to reject the notion that observation of a subject’s behaviour can tell an observer what she desires. This is the case because the theory leads to the absurd conclusion that if “a woman has a tendency to stutter, then it follows from the theory she has a desire to stutter…”\textsuperscript{14} This is clearly a silly conclusion to draw and shows that the theory is defective.

Swinburne holds that a subject’s desires do not determine the way in which she will act. This is why he asserts, as I have shown, that desires are only actualized when the subject forms an intention to act. It is possible, Swinburne argues, for a subject to form an intention to act in a manner that is contrary to what she desires to do.\textsuperscript{15} The reason a subject may choose not to do what she desires is because, he claims, she may judge that there are better reasons for not

\textsuperscript{12} Swinburne, \textit{Mind, Brain, and Free Will}, 84.

\textsuperscript{13} Schroeder, “Desire,” 1.1 Action-Based Theories of Desire.

\textsuperscript{14} Schroeder, “Desire,” 1.1 Action-Based Theories of Desire.

\textsuperscript{15} Swinburne, \textit{Mind, Brain, and Free Will}, 84.
doing the thing desired. What Swinburne is contrasting is a subject’s desires and her moral beliefs. On a rival theory, of course, moral beliefs could be understood as the generation of new desires. Swinburne, however, does not mention this possibility but argues that desire and judgments about what is good and bad are different things. Indeed, he holds that it is very rare for subjects to have a desire to do the good. This is the case, Swinburne asserts, because the notion of the good is “too abstract a notion to incline spontaneously to action.” This means, Swinburne believes, that when a subject represses a desire to do an action and chooses instead to do something she regards as the good, it is the result of choosing to exercise her power to reason morally over a strong desire to act in another way.

We can see from the foregoing that, according to Swinburne, a subject has privileged access to her desires in the same way that he has claimed she has privileged access to sensations, thoughts and intentions. This is the case, he holds, because a third party observer cannot tell from a subject’s action what it is she desires, and what inclinations are pressing her to act in a particular way. To illustrate that this is true, Swinburne offers the example of a subject having been offered a trip to Hawaii. Although her spontaneous desire would be to accept the gift, she refuses to accept it because of a judgment that it is more important to attend a pressing family event. However, only the subject can know why she refuses the offer of the trip. Swinburne claims that in this example the only desire that the subject has is to take the offer of the trip. But this is not something an observer of her behaviour can know from observing what the subject does. It follows from this example, Swinburne claims, that a third person observing the subject’s behaviour could not know what her desire was.

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17 Schroeder, “Desire,” 1.1 Action-Based Theories of Desire.
I think that Swinburne’s account of desire can be criticised on the basis that the distinction he draws between acting out of desire and acting because of a reasoned judgment of the moral is not tenable. This is the case because he has not shown that acting out of a reasoned judgment is different in kind from acting out of desire. The point I am making is that made by Locke who held that no voluntary action is done “without some desire accompanying it…”\textsuperscript{22} In his example of the subject who declines a free trip to Hawaii, Swinburne claims that an observer of the subject’s behaviour cannot know that her only desire was to go to Hawaii, but did not take the trip because moral reason overruled the desire. But if Locke is right, and I think he is, then an observer can know that the subject had to decide between two conflicting desires. Furthermore, if it is the possibility of happiness that motivates desire, as Locke claims,\textsuperscript{23} then an observer of the subject’s behaviour knows that her prime desire was to attend the family event.

Swinburne, as I have shown, holds that desires are pure mental events to which a subject has privileged access. However, he also states that desires are caused by both physiological and cultural factors, and that a subject cannot help having the desires she has at any particular time.\textsuperscript{24} But I would hold that if it is the case that desires are caused by physiological and cultural factors then other people can know what desires a subject has and will have. Physiological and cultural factors are public cognisables that are accessible to the subject and public observation and knowledge. If a subject says that she is thirsty, for example, she has a desire to drink. We know that thirst is something that is caused by a chemical process in the

\textsuperscript{23} Locke, \textit{An Essay concerning Human Understanding}, Book II, XXI, §41, 258.
\textsuperscript{24} Swinburne, “Desire,” 442.
hypothalamus.\textsuperscript{25} A person other than the subject could monitor this chemical process and, therefore, know that the subject will desire to drink. It should be noted that Swinburne would disagree with this characterisation because desires, he holds, have a propositional content of a subject being aware of their desires and how they act in relation to their desires.\textsuperscript{26}

Swinburne also holds that a subject can modify or change her desires by employing particular techniques.\textsuperscript{27} The subject can, for example, seek to change her desire for nicotine to a desire to stop smoking by undergoing hypnosis or wearing nicotine patches. But, if another person observes the subject undertaking hypnosis or wearing nicotine patches, then that observer can know that the subject has a desire and intention not to smoke. Because this is the case, I think that Swinburne fails to make a persuasive case that desires are pure mental events to which a subject has privileged access.

**Beliefs**

Swinburne’s treatment of belief is similar to, and in some ways a reiteration of his analysis of desire. For this reason my exposition of what he claims about belief will be relatively brief. According to Swinburne, a subject’s beliefs are propositional in structure and constitute the way that the world seems to be to that person.\textsuperscript{28} A subject, he holds, acquires her beliefs through experience and memory, and she holds her beliefs to be true because they are forced upon her by her experience of the world.\textsuperscript{29} In accordance with Swinburne’s account of desire, this means that beliefs are dispositions that the subject will find herself to have.

\textsuperscript{26} Swinburne, *The Evolution of the Soul*, 110.
\textsuperscript{27} Swinburne, “Desire,” 442.
\textsuperscript{28} Swinburne, *Mind, Brain, and Free Will*, 75.
\textsuperscript{29} Swinburne, *The Evolution of the Soul*, 127.
Similarly to his understanding of desire, Swinburne holds that beliefs continue to exist when the subject is not conscious of them. However, a subject can uncover her beliefs through an act of introspection.\textsuperscript{30}

Beliefs are mental events because only the subject has privileged access to them. This means, as we seen with the other mental events that Swinburne lists, that a subject cannot be in error about what her beliefs are because, although the beliefs can be erroneous in content, they are way that things seem to be to her.\textsuperscript{31} Because a subject has privileged access to her beliefs third party observers cannot, with complete accuracy, deduce her beliefs from her actions. To support his argument that third parties cannot know a subject’s beliefs Swinburne uses the example of a subject who asks a person $P$, who is known to her, for an aspirin to treat a headache. We are to understand that that $P$ has, in the time that the subject has known $P$, behaved in a benevolent way towards the subject.\textsuperscript{32} $P$ takes a pill out of an aspirin bottle and gives it to the subject. However the pill turns out to be cyanide and kills the subject. From this example Swinburne concludes that because $P$ has hitherto always been observed to act benevolently towards the subject, third party observers can assume that $P$ did not believe that she was going to kill the subject when she gave her the pill from her aspirin bottle. Of course it is possible, Swinburne states, that the contrary may be true. $P$ could have believed she was going to kill the subject. But if this were true then the inference that others had made from $P$’s observable benevolent behaviour would be wrong, and $P$ would know that the observers were wrong in their assumption.\textsuperscript{33}

\textsuperscript{30} Swinburne, \textit{The Evolution of the Soul}, 134.
\textsuperscript{31} Swinburne, \textit{Mind, Brain, and Free Will}, 76.
\textsuperscript{32} Swinburne, \textit{The Evolution of the Soul}, 133.
\textsuperscript{33} Swinburne, \textit{The Evolution of the Soul}, 133.
In concluding his account of desires and beliefs Swinburne states that beliefs and desires constitute a continuing background of mental events of which a subject becomes aware from time to time.\textsuperscript{34} Swinburne agrees with John Searle that this background of continuing beliefs and desires is what makes thoughts and intentional actions possible.\textsuperscript{35} This background of continuing mental events is necessary because they enable us to interpret particular actions that, if viewed in isolation, could be interpreted in a variety of ways.\textsuperscript{36}

It seems to me that the criticisms I made about Swinburne’s account of desires do, in large part, also apply to his account of beliefs. It is well known that some people who take drugs have psychotic episodes that involve delusional beliefs. It is conceivable that neuroscientists will one day be able to identify precisely which drug affects which part of the brain, and in exactly what way, when a subject testifies to having a belief that others know is delusional. Furthermore there is evidence to show that the surgical removal of tumours from different areas of the brain can result in the emergence of uncharacteristic beliefs and desires.\textsuperscript{37}

Swinburne’s assertion that a subject’s beliefs and desires form a background within which the subject has her sensations, thinks her thoughts and shapes her purposes, suggests, (although Swinburne does not put in the following way), this background is map-like in that it enables a subject to orient herself in a world to which the map is suitably congruent. But this raises an interesting discussion about other organisms that seem to exhibit map-like representational systems for survival. It is reported that some marine bacteria, for example, have internal magnets that align them with the magnetic field of the earth. In the northern hemisphere this

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\textsuperscript{34} Swinburne, \textit{The Evolution of the Soul}, 136.
\textsuperscript{36} Searle, \textit{The Rediscovery of the Mind}, 177.
\end{flushright}
has the effect of drawing them down to oxygen-deprived depths of the ocean where they thrive. The magnetic system of the bacterium can be understood as a representational system that indicates for the bacterium the direction of an oxygen-poor and, therefore, benign environment. Presumably the bacteria have evolved in this way in order to navigate and survive in the world. In regard to humans, a case could be made that the statement that beliefs and desires form a background in which a subject forms her thoughts and purposes, is another way of saying that the brain, operating with experience-moulded patterns of activated neurons, forms a functional system that allows them to survive and thrive in the environment. If this were the case, then mental events would not be part of an immaterial substance but, rather, a subjectivity that is an emergent quality of constant, massive, and complex neuronal activation that has a practical goal of world-navigating. Of course, if this were the case, then the background of beliefs and desires would not be pure mental events belonging to a non-material soul, but rather neuronal activity. If this picture is feasible it could be argued that soft materialism, as Swinburne defines it, would a plausible way of explaining the background of desires and beliefs.

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Agent Causality

Swinburne holds, as I have shown, that human beings are immaterial conscious substances (souls) interacting with material substances (brains and body parts). In his discussion of this interaction Swinburne is concerned to set out arguments that he believes will show how an immaterial conscious substance can intentionally cause neuronal events that initiate body movements. He wants to persuade his readers that the purposings that a subject has can be actualized in movements of the body. It is important for Swinburne’s philosophy of mind that he can give a persuasive account of how the soul can move the body, because if he is unable to produce a convincing account and supporting arguments for this, his substance dualist position will be vulnerable to soft materialist claims that all conscious events are caused by brain events, and that all events only have physical causes. Swinburne would be particularly vulnerable to attack from a soft materialist if he were unable to produce persuasive arguments for soul to body interaction because he freely admits that brain events are physical events that often cause conscious events.¹ In this chapter, therefore, I will set out and evaluate the particular theory of causality that he argues for in order to show how an immaterial conscious soul can move a material body.

Swinburne begins his account of causality by stating that theories of causation arise in order to explain observed regularities of one kind of event always being followed by the same kind of consequent event. As an example of event regularity he cites Hume’s example of a moving

¹ Swinburne, Mind, Brain, and Free Will, 105.
billiard ball hitting a stationary ball, and the second ball moving away from the first ball.\textsuperscript{2} Swinburne claims that there are two plausible rival theories that purport to explain the regularities in the behaviour of everyday substances.\textsuperscript{3}

One of these rival theories holds that there are universally valid principles, laws of nature, that explain what will happen when a moving ball strikes a stationary ball, and that these principles are in force whether or not there are any substances whose behaviour can be governed.\textsuperscript{4} Swinburne calls this the ‘relations-between-universals’ (RBU) account of causation.\textsuperscript{5} What this means, according to Swinburne, is that, for example, the notion of the ignition of gunpowder, understood as a universal concept, is linked by a necessary relation to the universal concept of explosion.\textsuperscript{6} When gunpowder is ignited and there is an explosion, we infer a causal relationship from the necessary connection between the universal concept of gunpowder ignition and the universal concept of explosion.\textsuperscript{7} The relations-between-universals (RBU) theory of causation accounts for the regularity of events by invoking deterministic relations between universals, which are the laws of nature.

Swinburne states that a rival theory of causation, that he labels as the substance-powers-and-liabilities account of causation (SPL)\textsuperscript{8}, holds that substances have properties that are powers to cause effects, and a liability to exercise that power in some or all circumstances.\textsuperscript{9} Swinburne illustrates his point by stating that an electron would not be an electron unless it had the power to repel other electrons that come into proximity with it, and it would not be an

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{2} Swinburne, \textit{Mind, Brain, and Free Will}, 125.
  \item \textsuperscript{3} Swinburne, \textit{Mind, Brain, and Free Will}, 130.
  \item \textsuperscript{4} Swinburne, \textit{Mind, Brain, and Free Will}, 6.
  \item \textsuperscript{5} Swinburne, \textit{Mind, Brain, and Free Will}, 6.
  \item \textsuperscript{6} Swinburne, \textit{Mind, Brain, and Free Will}, 129.
  \item \textsuperscript{7} Swinburne, \textit{Mind, Brain, and Free Will}, 129.
  \item \textsuperscript{8} Swinburne, \textit{Mind, Brain, and Free Will}, 7.
  \item \textsuperscript{9} Swinburne, \textit{Mind, Brain, and Free Will}, 129.
\end{itemize}
electron unless it had the liability to exercise this power of repulsion.\textsuperscript{10} He sets out the
difference between the two theories of causation as follows:

Both the RBU and SPL accounts purport to explain why (for example) the
proximity of Saturn to Jupiter causes Jupiter to move farther away the Sun.
This happens on the RBU account because there is a law (a component of the
world different to the substances which are governed by it), the law of
gravitational attraction, which makes it naturally necessary that, when close to
Jupiter, Saturn will exert a greater force on Jupiter than it normally does and
so draws it towards itself and away from the sun. It happens on the SPL
account because Saturn itself has the power to exert such a force with that
consequence, and a liability to exercise that force when it is closer than normal
to Jupiter.\textsuperscript{11}

Swinburne states that each of the two theories can give a causal account of the regularities
that are caused in nature. However he believes that the SPL account is superior because it is
simpler than the RBU account. His version of simplicity as a theory is that, assuming the
same predictive and explanatory power, SPL is simpler because it does not posit laws of
nature relations between universals, but just the natural entities that are regular in their
behaviour.\textsuperscript{12} This means that the SPL account of causality is, in Swinburne’s opinion, a more
successful account of the regularity of events than RBU because it does not need to explain
causality by universal laws of nature.

Having defined SPL as the power of substances to exercise causal influence, Swinburne
states that this account of causality is basic and cannot be analysed further, and does not need
to be analysed further, because its theory of event regularity does not need ontological
categories, for example, universals, additional to its own powers to account for all the events
that make up the history of the world.\textsuperscript{13} Swinburne claims that in the world of material
objects a physical substance would normally exercise its powers and, therefore, the liability

\textsuperscript{10} Swinburne, \textit{Mind, Brain, and Free Will}, 130.
\textsuperscript{11} Swinburne, \textit{Mind, Brain, and Free Will}, 130.
\textsuperscript{12} Swinburne, \textit{Epistemic Justification}, 86.
\textsuperscript{13} Swinburne, \textit{Mind, Brain, and Free Will}, 131.
to cause some effect. However because the exercise of causal influence is a basic category not analysable in terms of other categories, it is metaphysically possible, Swinburne claims, that there could be a substance with powers but which has no intrinsic liability to necessarily exercise those powers. Such a substance could instead use its power to cause an effect because it chose to intend that effect with no intrinsic liability to a given cause of action. Souls are, according to Swinburne, such intending-causing substances.14

Swinburne states that the action of a conscious soul intentionally trying to bring about a physical event is a causally basic action that cannot be analysed further.15 What Swinburne means by this is that when an agent tries to move her leg, ‘trying to do’ is all that is necessary for the leg to move. Whether the leg actually moves, Swinburne understands, depends on the cooperation of other causes such as the brain sending electrical impulses to the nerves in the leg muscles. However the point he wants to make by using the term ‘trying to do’ an action is that the causal influence of the intention to do the action is the same even if the condition of an agent’s body prevents the intention being actualized. An agent may form an intention, for example, to run one hundred metres in ten seconds. The bodies of most people are not in a condition to do this. However if the agent’s body was in elite condition, and perhaps if the agent tried harder, Swinburne holds that the causal influence of the intention will result in the intention being actualized.16

I have outlined how Swinburne develops a concept of agent causality that he believes is able to show how an immaterial conscious soul interacts with the material substance that is the body in order to actualize its intentions. But how does the interaction work from the other

14 Swinburne, *Mind, Brain, and Free Will*, 133.
16 Swinburne, *Mind, Brain, and Free Will*, 137.
direction; from the direction of physical brain events to pure mental events? According to Swinburne the immaterial conscious soul experiences itself as being acted upon. In the terminology of SPL this can be expressed, Swinburne claims, by holding that “some parts of our brains have liabilities to exercise powers to cause the subject to form an intention of a certain kind under certain circumstances.” However Swinburne holds that this does not mean that the conscious subject has to actualize the intention. That the soul can refuse to activate the intention caused by the brain is important to Swinburne because he holds that the soul is the seat of free will. I will deal with the issues of upward causality and free will in a subsequent chapter.

Swinburne’s discussion of causality is based on an assumption that a subject does experience a causal connection between a conscious intention that she forms to do some action and a consequent body movement. This account of causality is reminiscent of Locke’s notion of the active power of the mind to cause movement in the body. Swinburne’s sort of view is endorsed by Searle who argues that this causal experience becomes clear to us if we compare the experience of raising our arm with the experience of someone else raising our arm. But if this is true it raises an important issue that Swinburne discusses: namely how can non-material items cause events in a world that is claimed by classical physics to be causally closed in the sense that all physical events can only be caused by other physical events? Causal closure of the physical would be a principle that applied to neuronal activity of the brain because the brain is made up of millions of neurons that are made up of physical particles that are causally closed. If this is the case then conscious intentions, understood as

17 Swinburne, Mind, Brain, and Free Will, 136.
20 Swinburne, Mind, Brain, and Free Will, 112.
properties of an immaterial Swinburnian soul, should not be able to cause neuronal events because they could not break into the circle of causally closed matter.\textsuperscript{21}

Swinburne tackles this objection to his view that conscious intentions cause neuronal events by arguing that if neurons behave according to deterministic laws, as classical physics holds, then a neurologist who observes the physical particles that are in motion during a brain event, should be able to predict the particular thoughts that this activity will produce in a subject. However according to Swinburne this is a confidence that the neurologist cannot actually have because classical physics, which allowed this in principle confidence, has been superseded by quantum physics which does not allow it. Quantum physics, Swinburne explains, indicates that the activity of fundamental particles is not only not totally predictable, but also not totally determined.\textsuperscript{22} Furthermore, if quantum indeterminism means that it is not possible to predict what thoughts particular neuronal activity will cause, Swinburne argues that the same quantum indeterminism leads to the possibility of understanding how immaterial mental events can cause brain events without violating any physical principles.\textsuperscript{23}

A question that arises as a result of Swinburne’s discussion of how immaterial mental events can cause brain events is whether his account of quantum indeterminism is accurate in relation to brain events. According to Carnap, the indeterminacy of the behaviour of individual particles has no effect on the predictable behaviour of macro-sized things consisting of billions of particles. A stone, which consists of billions of particles, likely will not deviate from its expected course when I throw it at another object, even though the

\textsuperscript{21} Swinburne, \textit{Mind, Brain, and Free Will}, 113.
\textsuperscript{22} Swinburne, \textit{Mind, Brain, and Free Will}, 114.
\textsuperscript{23} Swinburne, \textit{Mind, Brain, and Free Will}, 115.
individual particles may be subject to quantum indeterminism. So, if any brain event involves whole populations of neurons being excited by perhaps millions of synaptic connections, as Churchland suggests, is the behaviour of such a large collection of neurons still undetermined? This is a position that was also held by Donald Mackay who specifically drew the conclusion that it is not likely that particle level indeterminacy in a single neuron would have any effect on the macro level behaviour of millions of neurons. The point about micro versus macro physics is important because Swinburne relies on the indeterminacy of a single neuron firing or not firing to open a causal gap that could, he proposes, be exploited by a pure mental event to cause a brain event. If Churchland and Mackay are right about brain events involving excitation of millions of neurons, then the kind of causal gap on which Swinburne relies is not feasible as a regular event explaining our every free-willed action.

Swinburne further argues that mental events can cause brain events because the causal closure of the physical, postulated by classical physics, is something that could never be justified even if quantum physics did not exist. To make this case Swinburne proposes, for the sake of the argument, that neurons behave according to deterministic laws. But he holds that if this is the case then a neurologist, who observed the pattern of neuronal discharges in her own brain by being hooked up to electrodes that produced a picture of brain activity on a screen, should be able to predict what thoughts she will have. But, Swinburne claims, the scientist can only confirm the accuracy of her prediction by experiencing the thoughts she has, and giving an account of them to others. However he claims she is only able to give such an account because she remembers the thoughts she was having. Swinburne’s point is that

the evidence to prove that the prediction is accurate requires experience and memory.\textsuperscript{28} But experience and memory are, in Swinburne’s dualist philosophy, mental events to which the conscious subject has privileged access.\textsuperscript{29} Furthermore if that is the case it means that if the predictions are to be verified, then the conscious experience and memories of the neurologist have to cause neuronal activity in her brain to cause her to give a report of the thoughts she was having and whether her prediction has been verified.\textsuperscript{30} This is precisely what Swinburne claims mental events are able to do.

The success of Swinburne’s arguments for a substance dualist ontology are dependent on him being able to persuasively show how the immaterial conscious intentions of a soul can effect the movement of a material body. Swinburne, as I have shown, develops an understanding of agent causality to show how mental intentions can cause movements in material bodies. His argument relies on the assumption that we are able to consciously decide to move our bodies in particular ways and we exercise the liability to move the body. He also argues that the notion of causality cannot be analysed further.

It seems to me that Swinburne is right in holding that we can make a conscious decision to move a body part and then observe that it moves. He is also correct in his assertion that my decision to walk down the street will result in my body moving. But these are banal matters upon which everyone agrees. The issue is about how these matters are to be interpreted philosophically. Whether they can be legitimately interpreted as a pure mental intention causing the bodily movement is a matter I will discuss shortly. A prior point to be made, however, is that even if Swinburne’s notion of agent causality were to be regarded as

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{29} Swinburne, “Could Anyone Justifiably Believe Epiphenomenalism,”198.
\textsuperscript{30} Swinburne, “Could Anyone Justifiably Believe Epiphenomenalism,”206.
\end{footnotesize}
persuasive, it would not bolster the case for substance dualism. This is the case because agent causality would equally apply to a position in the philosophy of mind that Swinburne describes as ‘soft materialism’. Soft materialism, as he describes it, holds that the only substances are material things, but that some of these material things, namely human brains, have mental properties such as feelings and intentions. The notion of agent causality, as Swinburne has developed it, could be a key component in any account of how, in a soft materialist schema, intentions cause body movements.

A more serious issue is whether there is any causal connection between a pure mental intention to move a body part and the movement of that part. This issue can be put into focus by asking whether human beings do experience themselves causing movements of the body. Nietzsche held that we have no experience of a cause. What Nietzsche seemed to claim was that the movement of an arm, for example, was not an isolated event but rather part of a continuum of movement that faces us. This continuum of movement consists of many aspects that a person feels: The feeling of will, the feeling of freedom, and the feeling of the tension of our muscles. However, out of this continuum of processes and movements we arbitrarily isolate one or points of regularity and call them call cause and effect. More particularly, Nietzsche claimed, we invent a subject that is responsible for things that happen, and for how they happen. But this subject, according to Nietzsche, is a fiction. If Nietzsche is right and the concept of the subject is eliminated in the sense that we cannot

31 Swinburne, The Evolution of the Soul, 9.
38 Nietzsche, The Will to Power, Book 3, §552b, 297.
isolate it for examination, or support ontology out of it, then Swinburne’s arguments for
causality cannot stand, to say nothing of his substance dualism. However if the Nietzschean
picture is correct, it has to be admitted that causal arguments advanced by non-dualists would
not be able to stand.
Personal Identity and Free Will

In this chapter I give an account of Swinburne’s understanding of what constitutes personal identity and libertarian free will. In regard to his account of personal identity, I will show how his definition of personal identity leads him to make an ontological distinction between a human being and a person. In making this distinction, Swinburne argues that a woman or man is a member of the human species, whereas a person is an entity that has consciousness. Thus he argues “creatures from another planet with a conscious life like ours would be persons, but not humans.”\(^1\) Swinburne also holds that, although it is in the definition of women and men that they have bodies, “is not part of our current understanding of ‘person’ that a person has to have a body.”\(^2\) I will show that this conclusion results in Swinburne adopting the position that persons are pure mental substances that may survive the death of the body with which they normally interact and inhabit.\(^3\) The chapter will also set out the arguments that Swinburne advances to show that persons have free will and are, therefore, morally responsible for their actions. In support of his contention that persons have free will Swinburne again invokes the issue of quantum indeterminacy. Furthermore he argues that, in the case of human beings, the characteristic of being able to act in unpredictable ways that enable them to evade the attacks of predators and, therefore, reproduce, has been a result of natural selection and the evolutionary process.\(^4\)

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\(^1\) Swinburne, *The Evolution of the Soul*, 4.
\(^3\) Swinburne, *Mind, Brain, and Free Will*, 173.
Personal Identity

The issue of the nature of personal identity is important for Swinburne because he believes that the soul is the bearer of an individual’s sense of self. His discussion about personal identity is concerned to set out the arguments that he believes show that the soul is the bearer of person identity. Swinburne argues that the problem of what constitutes personal identity is brought out by the question “what does it mean to say that a person $P_2$ at a time $t_2$ is the same person as a person $P_1$ at an earlier time $t_1$?” The answers that the philosophical tradition has given to this question have, Swinburne claims, consisted of two strands. The first strand asserts that personal identity involves similarity of memory. Thus the person $P_2$ at $t_2$ is the same person $P_1$ at $t_1$ iff the memories of $P_2$ at $t_2$ include most of the memories of $P_1$ at $t_1$. The second strand holds, according to Swinburne, that personal identity is constituted by necessary bodily continuity of the brain that the strands hypothesis holds is responsible for a person’s memories. These two positions on the question as to what constitutes personal identity may, Swinburne holds, count as evidence for personal identity, but they do not constitute personal identity. This means that he holds that neither continuity of memory, nor continuity of brain matter, are necessary conditions of personal identity, nor do they constitute personal identity. I will show the argumentation with which Swinburne backs this claim by first setting out his discussion of memory, and then his discussion of brain continuity.

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6 Swinburne, “Personal Identity,” 231.
7 Swinburne, “Personal Identity,” 232.
8 Swinburne, “Personal Identity,” 244.
9 Swinburne, Mind, Brain, and Free Will, 150.
In his account of the role that memory has in the constitution of personal identity, Swinburne makes a distinction between what he calls ‘apparent’ memory and ‘personal’ memory.\(^{10}\) The content of an apparent memory, according to Swinburne, is that the remembering subject was the person who did and who experienced the things being remembered, and that the events that constitute the present experiencing of the remembering took place over a period of time for the subject remembering.\(^ {11}\) Apparent memory can, Swinburne states, includes memories of things that other people could have seen the subject experiencing or doing.\(^ {12}\) Swinburne defines a ‘personal’ memory, on the other hand, as an immediate belief - immediate in the sense that it is not dependent on the apparent memory that a subject has that it was she who did or experienced the things that are the content of the apparent memory. A personal memory is an apparent memory with the addition of the subject’s memory of what it was like to be the doer of the action.\(^ {13}\) Because personal memory is a belief, it is, as we saw from Swinburne’s account of beliefs, a memory that is a pure mental event to which the subject has privileged access.\(^ {14}\) The importance of this public/private distinction that Swinburne makes to align with his distinction between apparent memory and personal memory for his account of personal identity will become clear later in my outline. I also indicate here that, in my evaluation of Swinburne’s account of personal identity, I shall criticise his distinction between apparent and personal memory and the use to which he puts it.

Swinburne develops his arguments about memory and brain continuity by the use of a number of thought experiments. In discussing the role of the continuity of apparent memory in the constitution of personal identity, he postulates the case of a subject who is told that she

\(^{10}\) Swinburne, *Mind, Brain, and Free Will*, 160.

\(^{11}\) Swinburne, *Mind, Brain, and Free Will*, 159.

\(^{12}\) Swinburne, *Mind, Brain, and Free Will*, 160.

\(^{13}\) Swinburne, *Mind, Brain, and Free Will*, 160.

\(^{14}\) Swinburne, *The Evolution of the Soul*, 162.
has a brain tumour and will suffer extensive, though not unendurable, pain for the rest of her life unless she has an operation that will remove more than a tenth of her brain. Because the subject wants to live, she has the operation. After the operation, it is assumed that the person $P_2$, who has a fraction of the brain of $P_1$, would remember some of the things that an observer would have expected $P_1$ to remember. The question is: How many of the memories of $P_1$ does $P_2$ have to remember to be the same person as $P_1$ if memory constitutes personal identity?\textsuperscript{15} Swinburne holds that “there seems to be no natural answer.”\textsuperscript{16} The point is, according to Swinburne, that $P_2$ hopes to be the same person as $P_1$ after the operation, but that observers cannot know when and if this hope is fulfilled. The conclusion that Swinburne draws from this thought experiment is, therefore, that personal identity cannot consist solely in terms of the continuity of apparent memories.\textsuperscript{17}

The situation is, according to Swinburne, different in the case of personal memory. Personal memory is, according to Swinburne, as I showed above, a belief. In the case of personal memory, the belief of the subject is that she did or experienced something that was caused by her past actions.\textsuperscript{18} As a pure mental event to which a subject has privileged and infallible access, personal memory claims are subject to the law of credulity. This means, Swinburne holds, that what a subject says about her personal apparent memories is to be believed \textit{prima facie}, unless it conflicts with other evidence, such as some experimentally supported theory about how the world works.\textsuperscript{19} Because this is the case Swinburne holds that the testimony of a subject $P_2$ at $t_2$, that she is the same person as $P_1$ at $t_1$, is justified if it is based on personal

\textsuperscript{15} Swinburne, “Personal Identity,” 239.
\textsuperscript{16} Swinburne, “Personal Identity,” 239.
\textsuperscript{17} Swinburne, “Personal Identity,” 239.
\textsuperscript{18} Swinburne, \textit{The Evolution of the Soul}, 167.
\textsuperscript{19} Swinburne, \textit{The Evolution of the Soul}, 167.
memory. Of course, if Swinburne’s argument that personal identity is constituted in part by personal memory were found to be persuasive, then personal identity would consist in the continuity of a pure mental and immaterial substance; a soul. This would be the case because, as I have shown, Swinburne holds that personal memory is a belief. Beliefs are, according to Swinburne, constituents of consciousness, which is an immaterial substance. Therefore personal identity would be, as a consequence of Swinburne’s definitions, the continuity of the reflective immaterial soul substance.

As I noted above, Swinburne asserts that philosophers have claimed that personal identity depends on body continuity, and particularly on brain continuity. Swinburne rejects this claim, and uses a thought experiment to do so. Swinburne asks his reader to again imagine that a subject has an operation in which a diseased part of her brain is removed and replaced by a similar part from another human brain. The amount that is removed is one tenth of the brain. Swinburne claims that such operations occur in real life, and that observers are justified in supposing that “the person after the operation is the same as the person before the operation.” The claim that Swinburne makes by using this thought experiment is that it is plausible to suppose that removing a tenth of a brain and replacing that tenth with material from another brain does not change the identity of the person who has had some of their brain removed. Furthermore, he claims that the new brain is still the brain of the subject who is operated on.

Swinburne develops this thought experiment further by proposing that each year for ten years a different tenth of the subject’s brain is removed and replaced. After ten years the subject

\[^{20}\text{Swinburne, The Evolution of the Soul, 167.}\]
\[^{21}\text{Swinburne, Mind, Brain, and Free Will, 155.}\]
\[^{22}\text{Swinburne, Mind, Brain, and Free Will, 155.}\]
with whom the thought experiment began has a completely new brain. The conclusion that Swinburne draws from this further elaboration of the thought experiment is that the subject $P_2$ with a new brain is the same person as $P_1$ whose brain was first operated on.\textsuperscript{23} This conclusion, according to Swinburne, makes it logically possible that personal identity is not constituted by brain continuity.

Swinburne seeks to drive this conclusion home with a further elaboration of the thought experiment. The reader is now to imagine that during each of the ten operations the subject, $P_1$, is conscious and has “a series of overlapping conscious experiences lasting for the whole of the each operation.”\textsuperscript{24} Swinburne claims that it is logically possible that this could happen and, if it did, it would mean that $P_1$ would be the same person as $P_2$ at the completion of the series of operations.\textsuperscript{25}

According to Swinburne, thought experiments of this kind show that it is logically possible that neither brain continuity, nor continuity of apparent memory, are necessary to constitute personal identity.\textsuperscript{26} However, what the thought experiment does show, Swinburne claims, is that the experience of a person having overlapping experiences throughout ten brain operations shows that it is “logically possible that a person could continue to exist with a totally new brain produced by gradual replacement of parts.”\textsuperscript{27} The conclusion that Swinburne draws from these assertions is that it is possible that a person could continue to exist without any continuity of the material body.\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{23} Swinburne, \textit{Mind, Brain, and Free Will}, 155.
\textsuperscript{24} Swinburne, \textit{Mind, Brain, and Free Will}, 156.
\textsuperscript{25} Swinburne, \textit{Mind, Brain, and Free Will}, 156.
\textsuperscript{26} Swinburne, “Personal Identity,” 240.
\textsuperscript{27} Swinburne, \textit{Mind, Brain, and Free Will}, 157.
\textsuperscript{28} Swinburne, \textit{Mind, Brain, and Free Will}, 157.
Personal identity, Swinburne wants to conclude, is grounded in the experience of an ongoing mental substance. Personal identity is something that cannot be reductively analysed in terms of any observable qualities. This unanalysability is the case because mental substances have what Swinburne calls ‘thisness’, and the bearer of this ‘thisness’ is the soul. ‘Thisness’, as Swinburne defines it, is something that makes a subject the particular person they are.

Swinburne explicates the ‘thisness’ by stating that a subject A could be duplicated. The clone B would share all the properties of A, such as appearance, mental life, and history. But, although this would be the case, there would be something underlying these properties that made A the particular person she is. This is the case, according to Swinburne, because substances are entities that have properties. But not all of these properties have to be present to constitute the existence of the substance. A subject could, he maintains, lose the power to move her legs, yet still remain the same person. Swinburne also argues that the physical parts of a subject, things such as electrons and protons, for example, do not have ‘thisness’. This means that a non-physical substance has to be the carrier of personal identity. The only candidate as the bearer of personal identity is, in Swinburne’s view, the soul.

Swinburne’s argument that material particles such as electrons and protons cannot have consciousness is not new. His argument has a certain history in Anglican apologetics against freethinking materialism. Swinburne’s argument echoes, for example, a position set out by

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29 Swinburne, “Personal Identity,” 240.
33 Swinburne, *Was Jesus God?*, 13.
34 Swinburne, *Was Jesus God?*, 13.
35 Swinburne, *Was Jesus God?*, 14.
the Anglican Divine, Samuel Clarke, in 1707-08. Clarke argued that because matter can be separated into distinct parts then, if matter was capable of being conscious, every separate particle of matter would have to have a separate and distinct consciousness. However, if this were the case, he argued, there could not be one individual conscious being. From this it followed, according to Clarke, that because the soul is an individual consciousness, it could not be a material substance. Swinburne, as I stated above, echoes Clarke’s argument, by holding that mental substances cannot be divided into parts as matter can be divided. As a consequence, he concludes that consciousness cannot be made of any kind of matter.

Swinburne concludes his analysis of personal identity by stating that in normal life the soul can only function as an identity bearer and conscious substance if it is interacting with a physical brain. However, he holds that it is possible that when the brain dies the soul could survive by either becoming connected to a new body, or even survive without a body at all. Although it is not my direct concern here, we can see how Swinburne’s philosophy of mind is developed with an eye to underpinning his theology of Christian resurrection and immortality.

I think that Swinburne’s account of memory in relation to personal identity is problematic at a number of points. I think that the distinction he makes between apparent memory and personal memory is a distinction that cannot be sustained. Swinburne defines a personal memory as an apparent memory with the addition from the subject who did the thing being remembered, remembering what it was like to be the doer of the thing being remembered.

38 Uzgalis, ed., The Correspondence of Samuel Clarke and Anthony Collins, 1707-08, 53.
39 Uzgalis, ed., The Correspondence of Samuel Clarke and Anthony Collins, 1707-08, 54.
40 Swinburne, Mind, Brain, and Free Will, 171.
41 Swinburne, Mind, Brain, and Free Will, 173.
But it seems to me that when I remember something that I did, that memory has the same
content as the memory of anyone else who had seen me do the thing being remembered. In
response to someone who asked me, for instance, ‘I am remembering you doing X, but what
is it like for you to remember now that you did X?’ I would not know what to say. This is to
say that there is no extra quality to my memory that I could describe that made the content of
what I remembered different from the content of what the other person remembered me
doing. This means, I think, that there is no personal memory in the way that Swinburne
defines it. Because of this lack of personal memory, personal identity does not derive from
purely private memory, but is partly constituted by social memory, that is, memory that is
shared with others.

Swinburne claims that personal identity is constituted by a subject’s personal memories of
events in her life. Even if we did accept the concept of personal memory and its distinction
from apparent memory, it is not a concept that alone could establish personal identity.
Swinburne’s criterion for personal identity requires the personal memory of the subject to be
accurate about what she remembers has happened to her. But our memories are fallible; we
sometimes think we remember that we did something when the reality is that we did not do
it.42 This means that third parties have no way, based solely on the subject’s memories, to tell
whether the person who is remembering now is the same person who did the things being
remembered to have happened in the past. What is needed to establish that a person, P2 at t2,
who is claiming to be the same person as P1 at t1, is another criterion independent of the recall
itself by which the personal identity of the person over time can be decided. The bodily
presence of the person at the time of the event being remembered is such a standard.43 In the

Paul, 1970) 56.
normal course of events, it is other people who remember a subject being bodily present at
the time when the events being remembered by the subject, occurred. This means that the
testimony of others about our bodily presence is, along with memory, an essential criterion to
establish personal identity. This testimony of bodily presence is the case because we
customarily do believe that people have a continuous physical presence over time.\textsuperscript{44}

Swinburne might object to this proposal by stating that bodily presence cannot be a criterion
for personal identity because the atoms that make up a body completely change over time.
However, this objection can be answered by showing that organisms are organized structures,
and that the structure remains the same through the process of the atoms that make it up being
replaced. Locke expressed this idea:

\begin{quote}
We must therefore consider wherein an Oak differs from a Mass of Matter, and that seems to me to be in this; that the one is only the Cohesion of Particles of Matter any how united, the other such a disposition of them as constitutes the parts of an Oak; and such an Organization of those parts, as is fit to receive, and distribute nourishment, and frame the Wood, Bark, and Leaves, \textit{etc.} of an Oak, in which consists the vegetable life… For this Organization being at any one instant in any one Collection of \textit{Matter}, is in that particular concrete distinguished from all other, and is that individual life…The case is not so much different in \textit{Brutes}…This also shews wherein the Identity of the same \textit{Man} consists; \textit{viz.}, in nothing but a participation of the same continued Life, by constantly fleeting Particles of Matter, in succession vitally united to the same organized Body.\textsuperscript{45}
\end{quote}

If bodily continuity is accepted as a criterion of personal identity along with memory, then I
think Swinburne’s notion of the personal identity being an immaterial substance conflicts
with our experience as personal identities that physically span the temporal arc of our lives.

\textsuperscript{44} Penelhum, \textit{Survival and Disembodied Existence}, 59.
\textsuperscript{45} John Locke, \textit{An Essay Concerning Human Understanding}, Book II, XXVII, §4, §5, §6, 330ff.
Free Will

Swinburne’s philosophy of mind is, to a great extent, animated by a desire to investigate whether persons can be held to be morally responsible for their actions. Persons can only be held responsible for their actions if they have free will. Swinburne argues that persons do have libertarian free will “in the sense that they are not causally necessitated to do the actions they do by brain events…” Swinburne defines free will in this way because he is concerned to investigate whether physical processes are completely deterministic in that “every event has a cause in the sense of a prior event which causally necessitates its occurrence in every detail.”

Swinburne is concerned with physical determinism because he holds that, in the interaction between the soul and the body, brain states cause beliefs and desires and, therefore, purposings. In short, he claims that brain events cause conscious events. This means that if brains events causally necessitate the conscious purposes of a subject in every detail, then these purposings will rigidly determine other brain states that, in their turn, determine the movements that the body will make. If this chain of events is causally necessitated, then there is no free will.

Swinburne’s response to physical determinism is to argue that it can be shown to be not the case in the world. If physical processes are not completely deterministic this will, he claims, give him reasonable grounds for assuming that mental events, such as purposings, are not

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deterministic in the causation of brain events.\textsuperscript{51} It needs to be noted that Swinburne’s discussion of free will in \textit{The Evolution of the Soul} was outlined before his account of agent causality in \textit{Mind, Brain, and Free Will} that, as we saw, gives an account of how pure mental events can cause bodily events. However, I think his account of determinism in the earlier work has elements that are not dealt with in his account of agent causality, and that is why I deal with this earlier text’s treatment of them here. Swinburne also sets out other arguments to make his case that persons have free will and I give an account of these in this section on free will.

In discussing whether the relationship between brain events and mental events is deterministic, Swinburne evokes quantum theory to assert that no physical system is totally deterministic.\textsuperscript{52} Swinburne’s discussion of quantum theory in relation to free will makes the same points he made in his discussion of agent causality about how pure mental intentions can cause bodily movements in a subject. For this reason, I shall not repeat these considerations here. However, it is important to note that it has been a long-standing concern of Swinburne’s to challenge a thoroughgoing deterministic account of the physical world. He argues, for instance, that if determinism is to stand, it must be able to describe the physical world in exact terms. It must, therefore, “state exact lengths, masses and temporal intervals.”\textsuperscript{53} However, according to Swinburne, our concepts for describing the physical world are necessarily inexact, and this inexactness, he asserts, cannot be removed from the language we have to describe the world.\textsuperscript{54} Because of this built-in vagueness of our concepts for describing the world, it is doubtful, Swinburne holds, whether our concepts can give a full

\textsuperscript{51} Swinburne, \textit{The Evolution of the Soul}, 232.
\textsuperscript{52} Swinburne, \textit{Mind, Brain, and Free Will}, 196.
\textsuperscript{54} Swinburne, “Vagueness, Inexactness, and Imprecision,” 298.
description of the world.\textsuperscript{55} We can see how this line of argument enables Swinburne to assert that there can be some indeterminism in the history of the events that make up the history of the world.

Swinburne also argues that free will in humans bestows an evolutionary advantage. His argument is that there would be no evolutionary advantage if mental events were to be determined by deterministic physical laws governing brain events.\textsuperscript{56} Indeed he asserts that it is a distinct advantage in escaping predators if the “laws” governing thought are indeterminate. This is the case because no matter how sophisticated a predator may be, it could not know what the prey will do and this indeterminism allows for practical unpredictability, which in turn allows a human prey to escape predators and be able, therefore, to reproduce. As a consequence of these observations, Swinburne holds that natural selection favoured “the evolution of organisms whose purposes were produced by a non-deterministic mechanism…”\textsuperscript{57} This means, Swinburne holds, that the connections between mind and brain are not determined.\textsuperscript{58} Because this is the case Swinburne repeats his conclusion that the human person, who is a pure mental substance, has a will that is free to actualize its intentions in the physical world.

A third argument that Swinburne brings to bear to show that there is indeterminism in the actualization of intentions is what he calls the phenomenon of “human countersuggestibility.”\textsuperscript{59} Swinburne holds that:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{55} Swinburne, “Vagueness, Inexactness, and Imprecision,” 298.
\item \textsuperscript{56} Swinburne, “The Indeterminism of Human Actions,” 442.
\item \textsuperscript{57} Swinburne, \textit{The Evolution of the Soul}, 258.
\item \textsuperscript{58} Swinburne, “The Indeterminism of Human Actions,” 440.
\item \textsuperscript{59} Swinburne, “The Indeterminism of Human Actions,” 443.
\end{itemize}
A countersuggestible agent, informed of the (deterministic) prediction of such a theory that he or she would do some simple basic action, would sometimes clearly try to do the opposite and would succeed because not doing such a basic action lies easily within his or her power.60

What the phenomenon of countersuggestibility shows, according to Swinburne, is that persons can resist the desire to conform to what a third party will predict they will do. This means, he concludes, that countersuggestibility is persuasive evidence of indeterminism in the actualization of human intentions61

All Swinburne’s arguments for free will are basically concerned to show how non-material intentions can be actualized in matter. His strategy, as I have shown, is to provisionally consider the hypothesis that brain events rigidly determine mental events for the purpose of refuting it. He believes that if he can persuasively show they do not and cannot, then he will have shown how freely chosen intentions can be realized in the physical world. This, in turn, will show that human persons have free will.

In assessing Swinburne’s arguments for indeterminism, I will not revisit the critical comments I made about quantum effects in the chapter on agent causality. However, an important point to make is, I think, that if Swinburne is right in claiming that there is some indeterminism in the physical world, then this should logically lead rather to the conclusion that free will is a quality of brain events. If physical indeterminism is true, it would to be logical to argue that ‘soft materialism’ can give a persuasive account of an agent’s ability to exercise free will. (To briefly recap: soft materialism, according to Swinburne, holds that all substances are material substances, and that some material substances have mental properties

60 Swinburne, “The Indeterminism of Human Actions,” 443.
61 Swinburne, The Evolution of the Soul, 259.
that are distinct from physical properties). But, of course, if the existence of free will is explicable in terms of physical indeterminism, then there is no need for it to be a quality of an immaterial conscious soul. I conclude from this that Swinburne’s dualism does not actually robustly support his position of libertarian free will.

Swinburne, as I stated, holds that if persons are to be held to be morally responsible for their actions then they have to be able to exercise free will in deciding which actions they will do. While this assertion seems unobjectionable, I do think he can be criticised for not considering theories of moral responsibility that are compatible with determinism. Strawson’s theory of moral responsibility is one such theory.\(^6^2\) Strawson’s theory holds that it is psychologically impossible for people to stop holding other people responsible for their actions. Holding people responsible for their actions is part of human nature. Because this is the case, mounting an argument that physical determinism undermines the concept of moral responsibility is a pointless and fruitless exercise. Strawson’s point is that, even if such an argument succeeded, people will still hold other people accountable for their actions because it is the nature of the human condition to do so.\(^6^3\) Strawson also held that, even if determinism were shown to be true, people would decide about whether to stop or to keep on making moral judgments, not on the grounds of whether they were determined in their actions or not, but on an assessment of what giving up making moral judgments would mean for human society.\(^6^4\) I have mentioned Strawson’s theory because it does seem to deliver the outcome that Swinburne wants from free will, namely moral responsibility, albeit one that might be theologically inconvenient for Swinburne, while allowing physical determinism. In


\(^{63}\) McKenna, “Compatibilism,” 4.3.2. Strawson’s Psychological Impossibility Argument.

\(^{64}\) McKenna, “Compatibilism,” 4.3.2. Strawson’s Psychological Impossibility Argument.
view of this I do not think Swinburne has made a persuasive case for the necessity of an immaterial conscious substance to guarantee free will.
My appraisal of Swinburne’s substance dualist philosophy starts by evaluating his claim that what he describes as ‘soft’ substance dualism is really different to what he characterises as an ‘extreme’ form of the dualist doctrine - the form he claims was held by Descartes.¹ I conclude that, despite Swinburne’s claim that his dualism is ‘softer’ than Descartes’ dualism, it is not. I then set out some common philosophic objections to substance dualism and discuss whether I think they are defeaters of Swinburne’s substance dualism. These objections are, first, whether the possibility of being able to conceive of persons as immaterial conscious substances separate from bodies, constitutes grounds for concluding that persons are different substances to material bodies.² The second objection I will consider is that substance dualists cannot know directly what mental states other people have, or if they have mental states at all.³ Thirdly, I discuss the objection that substance dualism is unable to convincingly explain how the immaterial can cause movement in a physical body.⁴ Finally I will assess, in relation to Swinburne’s ostensible concern with the evolution of souls, the objection that souls could not have evolved because they are immaterial and incapable of adapting to new environments.⁵

In the introduction to *The Evolution of the Soul* Swinburne holds that “under normal mundane conditions the functioning of the soul requires the functioning of the body.”⁶ This is what he calls ‘soft dualism’. He contrasts soft dualism with the dualism he claims was held by

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Descartes, namely that a soul will endure no matter what happens to the body. In his introduction to *Mind, Brain, and Free Will* Swinburne further nuances his understanding of substance dualism. He states that in his view the modern philosophical hostility to substance dualism “arises from the feeling that it leads to the view that having a body and bodily well-being are unimportant.” Swinburne claims that this view of dualism is ill-founded and that, in his version, having a body is vital for a worthwhile human life because the pleasure that arises from bodily causes is good. Substance dualism is not hostile to bodily life, he claims, because it is a “doctrine about what is necessary for our existence, not about what makes a full and worthwhile life.”

It is true to say that Swinburne’s understanding of the soul requiring a functioning body was a position he held throughout *The Evolution of the Soul* (1986). In the final chapter of that work he likened the soul to a light bulb and the brain to an electric light socket. This means that the soul only functions - it will only have a conscious life - if it is plugged into the brain. Of course, if the brain is destroyed the soul no longer functions. However in his later work, *Mind, Brain, and Free Will* (2013), Swinburne explicitly states that humans are pure mental substances, and that it is logically possible that a person could continue to survive with disembodied thoughts and intentions. According to Swinburne then, the body is only a contingent part of a person. This reflects the Cartesian position that the soul is separate from the body and can exist without the body. In view of this, I contend that Swinburne’s

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15 Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Meditation 6, §78, 54.
most recent account of the soul seems congruent with that of Descartes and is, to use Swinburne’s own description of the Cartesian position, an extreme form of the dualist doctrine.\textsuperscript{16}

Furthermore I think that Swinburne’s claim that the dualist doctrine is about what is necessary for our existence and not about what makes a full and worthwhile life is not borne out by his lines of argument. Swinburne holds that humans have the ability to choose freely between desires, and to intentionally actualise desires that they believe are worthwhile.\textsuperscript{17} But having desires and exercising free will are, according to Swinburne, pure mental events of the soul. Therefore the good, and that which presumably makes life worthwhile, does not have anything to do with the body. Swinburne’s arguments naturally invite the thought, I contend, that it is only the mental life of the immaterial soul that is not only necessary for human existence, but also what makes that existence worthwhile – the body is irrelevant.

Swinburne’s substance dualism in its later articulation holds that the concept of a person does not entail the presence of a body with a brain. In support of this contention, Swinburne argues that it is conceivable that however much we may know in detail about what happens to a body with which a person interacts, we could not know what happens to the person.\textsuperscript{18} This argument relies on a version of a conceivability-possibility principle.\textsuperscript{19} The conceivability-possibility principle can be characterised as follows: if we are able to conceive of something,

\textsuperscript{16} Swinburne, \textit{The Evolution of the Soul}, 10.
\textsuperscript{17} Swinburne, \textit{The Evolution of the Soul}, 231.
\textsuperscript{18} Swinburne, \textit{The Evolution of the Soul}, 149.
then it has to be possible.\textsuperscript{20} Thus, if it is conceivable that a person can exist without a body, then it is logically possible that persons can exist without bodies.\textsuperscript{21}

In Swinburne’s argument the conceivability-possibility principle takes the form of a split brain thought experiment. In this thought experiment one hemisphere of a subject’s brain is transplanted into a body from which the brain has been removed. The hemisphere is hooked up and begins working. The second hemisphere of the subject’s brain is transplanted into a different but similarly prepared body. The claim that Swinburne makes is that the transplant has created two persons, each with the subject’s character and memories.\textsuperscript{22} However, they cannot both be the subject because, if they were, they would each be the same person. But this is not possible because they both now have their own mental lives. The question is, therefore, which of the two persons is the original person? According to Swinburne, there are three possibilities. It is possible that the person with the left hemisphere of the original person’s brain is the original person. Alternatively, it is possible that the person with the right hemisphere of the original person’s brain is the original person. The third possibility is that neither of the two is the original person. Although there are three possibilities, Swinburne holds that we could not know which possibility had happened.\textsuperscript{23} The conclusion that Swinburne draws from this thought experiment is that, although we know in great detail what happened to the physical brain material, we cannot determine, from knowing what happened to the brain hemispheres, which of the two persons is the subject, if either of them are.\textsuperscript{24} He concludes, therefore, that the concept of a person does not entail the presence of a body.

\textsuperscript{22} Swinburne, \textit{The Evolution of the Soul}, 148.
\textsuperscript{23} Swinburne, \textit{Mind, Brain, and Free Will}, 152.
\textsuperscript{24} Swinburne, \textit{The Evolution of the Soul}, 148.
In assessing this argument it is important to know that the kind of possibility that Swinburne invokes is a logical possibility.\textsuperscript{25} A logical possibility, according to Swinburne, is something that does not involve a contradiction.\textsuperscript{26} A logical contradiction would be to assert that someone is married and unmarried at the same time. This means that it is not possible to conceive of a person being married and unmarried at the same time. However it is possible, for example, to conceive of human beings flying like birds. Indeed we know that people did once conceive of people flying like birds. And while it may be asserted that it is physically impossible for humans to fly like birds, it is not logically impossible if the universe obeyed different physical laws.\textsuperscript{27} The problem with Swinburne’s argument above, I would contend, is that logical possibility is not enough to establish the case that a person is separate from the body with which they actually interact. This is the case because what is asserted to be possible has to be checked against our empirical experience of whether, in this case, split-brain operations are at all possible or even conceivable. Clearly they are not technically possible at this point in time, and we cannot make a judgement whether they ever will be technically possible until we understand the way the billions of neurons operate in the brain. Because we do not understand the operation of the brain, we have no idea of what constraints there may be about what can be technically or physically possible to do to the brain.\textsuperscript{28} Furthermore we do not know whether those technical constraints amount to logical impossibilities. I conclude, then, that Swinburne’s thought experiment cannot establish that persons are separate to the bodies and brains with which they interact.

As I pointed out in my second chapter, an objection that is raised against substance dualism is that a dualist cannot know what mental states other people have, or if they have mental states

\textsuperscript{25} Swinburne, \textit{Mind, Brain, and Free Will}, 153.
\textsuperscript{26} Swinburne, \textit{Mind, Brain, and Free Will}, 19.
\textsuperscript{27} Jaworski, \textit{The Philosophy of Mind: A Comprehensive Introduction}, 45.
\textsuperscript{28} Jaworski, \textit{The Philosophy of Mind: A Comprehensive Introduction}, 47.
at all. This is the case, the objection runs, because the substance dualist maintains that mental states are accessible only to the person whose states they are.\textsuperscript{29} I pointed out in that chapter that Swinburne attempts to answer this criticism by formulating what he called a principle of testimony that holds that we should believe what others say about the mental events they are having. In that chapter I contended that Swinburne’s principle of testimony did not answer the criticism and, because this is the case, the substance dualist cannot know what mental events, if any, other people have. In this appraisal I want to tease out the implications and make an appeal to consistency: I would argue that if, as Swinburne concludes from the split brain thought experiment, we can know everything that happens to bodies but cannot be certain as to what happens to persons, then we cannot know if a body has a person connected to it, nor can we know if other persons actually exist.\textsuperscript{30} This is a perniciously solipsistic position and not one that Swinburne would wish to adopt, but I think his substance dualism and his arguments for it cannot defend itself against this challenge.

In the normal course of social life, our observation of the bodily behaviour of another human is essential to our judgment as to whether that human has thoughts and desires similar to those we believe that we are having. As C.D. Broad asserted:

\textit{…it would be admitted by everyone that the perception of a foreign body of a certain kind, which moves, alters its expression, makes noises, and so on, in certain characteristic ways, is a necessary part of the basis of our belief in the existence and activity of another mind.}\textsuperscript{31}

The point is that in a conversation with another human we are constantly observing her facial expressions and body movements, and as we do we are making judgments about the emotions, thoughts, intentions and desires of that human. A particular facial expression leads

\textsuperscript{29} Jaworski, \textit{The Philosophy of Mind: A Comprehensive Introduction}, 50.
me to assume that someone is angry. If I start to do some task and another human starts to help me, I assume they have an intention to assist me. In situations like these it seems to me that we cannot avoid assuming that other humans have mental events that are similar to our mental events.\textsuperscript{32} I am not claiming that we are always right in our judgment about what particular thought or intention a human has from the observation of their body. It is possible that a human who testifies that she has a certain desire or intention may be fooling us. But I am claiming that, even if we suspect that someone is lying, we try to determine whether she is lying by observing facial expressions and other body movements.\textsuperscript{33} We do, I contend, depend upon observing the behaviour of human bodies in deciding whether there are minds other than ours in the world.

However, if Swinburne is correct in holding that knowing what bodies are doing does not give us grounds for knowing with any certainty what happens to persons, then we cannot infer from observing the behaviour of a body whether it is connected to any person. It may be that the facial expressions, eye movements, being red in the face or fidgeting, are just what the material of which human bodies are constituted, does. When we observe these movements of the body we may be right to conclude that the body is connected to a person. On the other hand, it may be a false conclusion.\textsuperscript{34} It may be possible, as Locke suggested, that two non-communicating, non-mutually-aware persons are connected to the same body at different times of the day.\textsuperscript{35} Alternatively it may be that there are no persons connected to any human bodies other than our own. I think, therefore, that the substance dualism that Swinburne holds leads to a challenge of solipsism. However, whether substance dualism necessarily leads to solipsism is a redundant question in reality. Foster (1991), who is a

\textsuperscript{32} Broad, \textit{Mind and its Place in Nature}, 323.
\textsuperscript{33} Broad, \textit{Mind and its Place in Nature}, 332.
\textsuperscript{34} Jaworski, \textit{Philosophy of Mind: A Comprehensive Introduction}, 52.
\textsuperscript{35} Locke, \textit{An Essay Concerning Human Understanding}, Book II, XXVII, §23, 344.
defender of Cartesian dualism, develops a notion of embodiment “that takes the form of a direct functional connection between the basic subject and a biological organism.” Foster develops this notion of embodiment in order to propose that the organism can be the representative of the person in situations where there are third person observers present. It is this embodiment, Foster claims, that enables an observer to know what a subject is feeling and thinking by observing the behaviour of the body to which she is connected. This is a notion that Swinburne may have found helpful in his account of dualism, but it would sabotage his method for establishing that dualism.

Another objection that is frequently advanced against substance dualism is how an immaterial entity that takes up no space can cause events in a physical entity that does exist in space. This objection, however, depends on an understanding of causality as the operation of natural forces such as the transfer of energy as when, for example, one billiard ball comes into contact with another. I do not think this objection is, however, a defeater of substance dualism. Lycan (2009) argues that although it is an incisive criticism of substance dualism, it is not a defeater, not least because there is no agreed theory of causality itself. Lycan also argues that, if we give up the assumption of physical determinism, as Swinburne certainly does, a model for mind-brain causation may emerge. It may be that Swinburne’s account of agent causality is such a model, or the start of the development of one. It seems to me that if this is the case, and given the long controversy about causality in philosophy, the objection is not a defeater of substance dualism. However, as I demonstrated in my discussion of agent causality, this understanding of causality could equally apply to what Swinburne calls soft

37 Foster, The Immaterial Self: A Defence of the Cartesian Dualist Conception of the Mind, 265.
38 Jaworski, Philosophy of Mind: A Comprehensive Introduction, 56.
39 Lycan, “Giving Dualism its Due,” 557.
40 Lycan, “Giving Dualism its Due,” 558.
materialism. Because this is the case there would be no persuasive reason to choose substance dualism as the only way to understand mind-body interaction.

A further objection that is brought to bear against substance dualism is that natural selection could not have produced souls because they are not material entities that can adapt to different environments.\textsuperscript{41} As I understand it, the claim being made is that immaterial entities that do not take up space cannot be subject to natural selection. Swinburne, however, does not give an account of how an immaterial soul evolves. Apart from asserting that the soul exists once the egg is fertilized at conception, he really has nothing to say about how the soul has evolved. He holds that it is beyond the competence of science to provide a theory to show why mental events exist.\textsuperscript{42} Furthermore, it is beyond the capacity of scientists to show how the electro-chemical events that take place in brains can be connected to consciousness. However, the fact that Swinburne cannot give an account of how souls evolve does not, I think, defeat substance dualism. This is the case because there are conscious organisms in the world whose presence has not been adequately accounted for by biological evolutionary theory.\textsuperscript{43}

Swinburne’s evolutionary narrative and his acceptance that having a body is necessary for a worthwhile and pleasurable life could, despite his argument against materialism, be construed as a kind of dualistic naturalism. His position that substance dualism is about what is necessary for existence and not what makes a worthwhile life, combined with his lack of any sort of elaborated theory of what permits the transcendence of the human person, could allow his dualism to be interpreted as a way of positing a natural transcendence of

\textsuperscript{41} Lycan, “Giving Dualism its Due,” 559.
\textsuperscript{42} Swinburne, \textit{The Evolution of the Soul}, 195.
matter, without that transcendence being anything beyond nature. His philosophy could be seen, that is, as an attempt to make a place for human subjectivity in nature, rather than as being in the tradition of Christianity-conducive accounts of the philosophy of mind. Swinburne as a theologian would probably reject this reduction of his dualism to a kind of naturalism, but it is a potential inadequacy of his position when viewed as a theology friendly philosophy.

In concluding this appraisal of Swinburne’s substance dualist philosophy, I hold that he is correct in his claim that humans have sensations and thoughts, that they formulate purposes, that they have beliefs and desires, and know that they have these states. I think that any account of human life has to find a place for these events in its narrative. I also agree with the claim that physicalism, in its various forms of behaviourism, actually denies the existence of these conscious states. I therefore appreciate Swinburne’s attempt to find a way of including these subjective states in an account of human life. However, for the reasons set out above, I do not think substance dualism, as he has argued for the doctrine, is a persuasive account.

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44 Swinburne, Mind, Brain, and Free Will, 4.
Bibliography:


