



## Creation, bugs, and emergence

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### Abstract

An argument is presented, based on a common-sense interpretation of an everyday experience, for emergent dualism as the best available account of the origin of the human mind/soul. Emergent dualism is superior to subjective idealism in that it honors the common-sense conviction that the things we encounter have a real, physical existence, separate from our mental perceptions of them. It is superior to materialism in that it allows for our mental states to have real, physical effects, distinct from the effects of the physical states that accompany the mental states. It is also superior to materialism in allowing for a real, unified self that is not merely a collection of physical particles. These features allow emergent dualism to provide a foundation for libertarian free will; belief in such free will is another deliverance of common sense that cannot readily be reconciled with materialism. Emergent dualism is superior to standard varieties of dualism in giving a plausible account of the minds of non-human animals. Perhaps surprisingly, emergent dualism is superior both to traditional dualism and to standard varieties of materialism in combining readily with theories of biological evolution, in which natural selection promotes both the physical and mental development of complex organisms.

Research Article



### Keywords

emergent dualism, Cartesian dualism, animal consciousness, materialism, causal closure, argument from reason, unity-of-consciousness argument, free will, common sense.

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## A Story

Begin with a little story. You are out in the country, walking across a field with a child as your companion. The sun is shining, wildflowers are blooming, swallows are swooping around you. Your companion stumbles slightly, and you hear an ominous buzzing. She has stepped on a yellow bee<sup>1</sup> nest, and the insects are beginning to swarm. You grab her arm and begin running as fast as the two of you can go. Fortunately, the damage to the nest has been slight, and only a few of the yellow bees have been aroused. After a minute or two, most of them have returned to the nest, and you stop to get your breath. But one especially persistent yellow bee has kept up the pursuit and is now intent on retribution. You are prepared as always, and you have with you a copy of your favorite philosophy journal! Just as the insect lights on your companion's back, ready to insert its sting, you give it a whack with the journal. The yellow bee drops to the ground, twitches a couple of times, and is still.

Now, some observations about your reactions to this series of events. First, and most obvious, you automatically assume that there really is a yellow bee, made up of some extremely complicated chemicals, that has pursued you and your child companion. The insect is a real entity in itself, distinct from the two of you, the cows grazing in the field, and the birds flying overhead. Second, you automatically assume that the insect was angry, or upset, and is in some way consciously responding to the event of having its nest damaged. You know, of course, that it has been argued that such reactions as you have witnessed are purely automatic neural responses that show nothing in terms of any kind of experience on the insect's part. But while you can consider this as a theoretical possibility, this kind of interpretation never occurred to you, or would have seemed in any way plausible, while the events were in progress. Third, you now assume that, once having been swatted by you, that is the end of that particular yellow bee. You don't think there is some sort of ghostly survivor, that might perhaps be reincarnated and return to sting another day. There are no doubt innumerable replacements for the insect you have swatted, but that one bug is gone forever.

But now for the point of this little episode. I want to utilize our spontaneous response to episodes such as the one narrated, to support the plausibility of the answer I will be giving to the question, What is the origin of human souls? G. E. Moore (here following the 18<sup>th</sup>-century philosopher Thomas Reid) proclaimed himself an adherent of "the common-sense view of the world"

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1. In America, a "yellow jacket" is a small stinging insect that makes nests in the ground. I am told that the Farsi equivalent translates as "yellow bee."

(Moore, 1989). This common-sense view is the way we spontaneously and naturally believe the world to be, without needing to arrive at such a view by conscious reasoning. Moore did not suppose this common-sense view to be automatically immune to dissenting arguments by philosophers. He thought, however, that in almost all cases the weight of the arguments mounted against it falls well short of the inherent credibility of the common-sense view itself. I concur in this, and my story aims at extending the common-sense view in a way that, I shall argue, is helpful to *emergent dualism* as an account of the soul's origin.

So, what philosophical conclusions are supported by our response to this incident? The first such conclusion is *physical realism*. As noted above, we do automatically assume, in thinking about the episode, that the yellow bee is a *real thing*, a *real being*, one composed of *physical stuff* of the kind the physical sciences tell us about. But, you may wonder, why is this even worth mentioning? Who could possibly deny this obvious fact? Well, a subjective idealist, like the 18<sup>th</sup>-century philosopher George Berkeley, would deny it. Berkeley held that “to be is to be perceived,” which means that the very existence of that yellow bee, insofar as we are aware of it, consists entirely in the presence of “yellow-bee sensations” in the minds of the people who observe the insect. There is no actual, physical yellow bee that exists over and above those sensations.<sup>1</sup> Of course, this skepticism about the existence of ordinary objects, as things whose existence does not depend on any observer, is not limited to insects. The pasture, the grass that is growing on it, even the sun and the wind, exist precisely and only in the minds of those who perceive them. Pretty implausible, you may be thinking (at least, I hope you are!). But this is philosophy, and you have to get used to considering some ideas that seem far-fetched and incredible. I hope, though, that you will not take leave of your common sense while you consider them.

A second conclusion that is supported by your reaction to this episode is what I shall term *mental realism*. You naturally assumed that the yellow bee was experiencing anger (or some buggy feeling analogous to anger), and that the insect's behavior was prompted by this feeling. You are aware, as a philosopher, that some have held that this assumption is unwarranted and that the insect's behavior is purely a spontaneous neural response unrelated to any subjective feeling on the insect's part. But that is a thought for the seminar room: as the events unfolded, such ideas did not even begin to seem plausible to you. This will be true, at least, if you are typical of “common sense

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1. Whether there are conscious experiences *in the insect's own mind*, over and above the experiences in our human minds, is so far as I can tell a question Berkeley did not address.

participants” in such events.

Yet a third conclusion will be termed here *animal mortality*. This is a view that seems naturally to go along with physical realism though it is not entailed by it. You think of the insect as genuinely composed of ordinary physical stuff, whatever else may be involved. And when that assortment of physical stuff is squashed, or otherwise rendered non-functional, that is the end for the insect in question. The notion of the bug as a non-physical “something” that survives the episode does not occur to you.

Now for the use I am going to make of these observations. In order to pave the way for my answer to the question about the origin of souls, I will be arguing that several other answers are unsatisfactory. My aim is plausibility, not proof, which may well elude us indefinitely. I will try, however, to persuade you that the view I will present is the most believable, the most likely to be correct, of the various options available to us.

## Against Idealism

The first view to be targeted is *subjective idealism*, according to which insects, trees, mountains, and all other “physical objects” consist entirely in perceptions in the minds of those who observe them. Among other benefits, this view affects a simplification of metaphysics: the perceptions exist in any case, so why complicate the issue by supposing that there are, in addition to the perceptions, actual material objects? There can be no doubt, however, that such a view is strongly in conflict with common sense. As you were running away from the yellow bees, nothing was further from your mind than the thought that the insects, the ground across which you were running, the wind and the sky, and everything else around you were merely ideas in your mind. Berkeley, to be sure, argued that this idealist view is really the view of “the man on the street,” but there can be no doubt that he was wrong about that.

But why should the fact that idealism is opposed to common sense count heavily against it? Well, there is the fact that realism about the physical world is an immediate, and emphatic, deliverance of our cognitive system. If we are going to reject something this fundamental in our natural way of thinking, why should we trust other things our minds tell us? We may also reflect that thinking in this way has led to an impressive degree of evolutionary success for us humans, so the prospect of rejecting it should give us pause. If, however, we are theists, an even more pressing question presents itself: Why should we suppose that God, in endowing us with the power of reason, has constructed our cognitive system in such a way that it inexorably leads us astray on this important point? And if we do suppose he has done this, why

should we imagine that other aspects of that system will lead us to a true knowledge of the world? For the present, then, I proceed on the assumption that physical realism is true: that the world really does consist of material things, having, in general, the sorts of properties that common sense, together with our best scientific knowledge, asserts things to have.

## Against Materialism

Far more popular than idealism on the contemporary scene are different varieties of *materialism*, the view that all of reality (at least, all non-divine reality) consists entirely of the material things whose existence has just been insisted upon. We have, on this view, not only the physical things themselves, but the entire body of natural scientific knowledge, which confers on us marvelously impressive capabilities to understand, predict, and control the activities of such physical things. Why isn't that enough? Why do we need to suppose that there is something else, something non-physical?

In order to keep this paper within reasonable limits, it is necessary to abbreviate the critique of materialism that would ideally be included here. I will, therefore, content myself with stating briefly the main objections, leaving their fuller elaboration to other writings.

- a. There is the notorious "hard problem" of consciousness: How can a purely material thing be conscious, or think, or perceive? The only answer is: We don't know (see: McGinn, 2004; Moreland, 2009). To be sure, the fact that we have no understanding of how consciousness can arise from a material basis does not by any means demonstrate that it does not, in fact, so arise. What it does show is that, if matter can indeed give rise to consciousness, then there is much more to the nature of matter than our most advanced physical science has so far been able to discern.
- b. Supposing that mental states do somehow exist, there is the problem created by the *non-mechanistic* and *non-intentional* character of physical processes. The processes of physics are *mechanistic* in that, however subtle and complex they may be, they make no reference either to *intentional contents* or to *norms* or *purposes*. Materialists, furthermore, affirm the *causal closure of the physical domain*: In looking for the causes of any physical event, we need never consider any non-physical causes: in particular *norms* and *purposes* play no role in the causation of physical events. But we ordinarily assume that our beliefs and conclusions about various matters are the results of our *reasoning* in terms of the *intentional content* of our beliefs, reasoning done with the *purpose of arriving at the truth*. If this were not so, the scientific knowledge on which we so strongly rely would have no warrant.

For materialism, which typically insists that all explanation must be physical, it is difficult to see how this requirement, as expressed in the “argument from reason,” can be satisfied (Reppert, 2009; Hasker, 1999, pp.58-80; 2013).

- c. There is the problem that the subject of consciousness must be *simple*. It seems evident, upon reflection, that *a complex state of consciousness cannot exist distributed among the parts of a complex object*. But any purely material “thinking thing” would, it seems, be just a complex object - but if so, where does the actual thinking go on? This is the “unity-of-consciousness” argument: for materialism, no reasonable answer seems possible (Hasker, 1999, pp.122-46; 2016, pp.13-40).
- d. Yet a further difficulty arises for philosophers who are concerned to affirm that humans are possessed of free will - especially, the libertarian version according to which, in a free choice, there must be “alternative possibilities,” different ways in which the world, and one’s life, can be depending on which of the alternatives is selected. Materialist views have difficulty in finding room for genuine alternatives, except perhaps as they may arise from quantum indeterminacies that affect the process of choice. But there is a widespread intuition that quantum indeterminacies, which are by definition random in nature, cannot provide the explanation for our free, rational choices (see: Pereboom, 2001). Free will clearly requires that our free choices should not be capable of being given a mechanistic explanation - thus, a further problem related to what was stated in section (b) above. Free will also requires that there be a *single, unified agent* that performs the free actions, as specified in (c) above. It is extremely difficult to see how a materialistic view can satisfy these requirements, and in fact, materialists very seldom affirm free will in the libertarian sense.

Without doubt, much more would need to be said to make these objections to materialism fully convincing. But life is short, even if philosophy tends to be long, so we must go on.

### Against Cartesian Dualism

We now address three different accounts of the origin of consciousness, each of which has a claim to be labeled “Cartesian Dualism,” after the 17<sup>th</sup>-century philosopher Rene Descartes. All three of them hold that the human soul is a non-physical substance, especially and individually created by God, which is joined to, and interacts with, a physical body. So these views are all immune to the objections that have been raised against both idealism and materialism. Where they differ is in the accounts they give of the minds and consciousness of non-human animals. For what I am calling “Cartesian Dualism 1.0,” the

account of animal consciousness is simple: there is no such thing. Descartes himself wrote that if animals “could think as we do, they would have an immortal soul as well as we, which is not likely, because there is no reason for believing it of some animals without believing it of all, and there are many of them too imperfect to make it possible to believe it of them, such as oysters, sponges, etc.” (Descartes, 1971). This refusal may seem plausible in a way, but it has some radical implications. It means that your pet dog is not really expressing happiness when he greets you on your return home, nor is the animal experiencing pain when his tail is accidentally stepped on. (Descartes himself had a pet dog; one wonders whether in his daily life he regarded the dog as an automaton!) More ominously, this viewpoint encouraged some followers of Descartes’s view to conduct experiments on animals involving vivisection: the sounds of agony coming from the subjects were no indication of actual pain and suffering since animals are incapable of consciousness! Such a view, I submit, is both absurd and morally pernicious.

The unacceptability of Cartesian Dualism 1.0 has led some thinkers to embrace what I shall term Cartesian Dualism 1.5. Animals do indeed have conscious experiential states, but they do this without possessing souls. In the case of animals, unlike human beings, it is merely the physical organism that has these experiences. Thus, one is able to deny to animals the exalted status that would come with the possession of an immortal soul, without following Descartes in his hopeless denial of animal experiences.

One might think it would be difficult to arrive at a mind-body theory that is more incredible than Cartesian Dualism 1.0, but the 1.5 model makes a good attempt. The view will need to reject, and if possible, to refute, the arguments against materialism alluded to in the previous section of this essay. If the physical brain, all on its own, is capable of having the sorts of experiences we attribute to animals, then none of those arguments can possibly be sound. And once we have abandoned the reasons that have been given for the existence of an immaterial soul, the justification for dualism is beginning to look extremely shaky. In practice, there will probably be no attempt to refute the anti-materialist arguments; rather, the view simply provides a convenient way to affirm the exalted status of human beings and human souls, while effectively ignoring the issues concerning animal souls and animal consciousness.

Leaving behind both earlier versions with few regrets, we turn to Cartesian Dualism 2.0, the only version of Cartesian dualism which deserves to be taken seriously in a contemporary discussion. This dualism accords souls to all creatures that give evidence of possessing consciousness. (Obviously, there will be disagreements about borderline cases.) These souls are not all created equal; instead, each kind of animal will have (or on some accounts will *be*) a

soul suited to perform the sorts of mental functions that kind of animal is capable of. But the souls are indeed all created; only God can make a soul. Dualism so understood is, it seems to me, a serious option, at least for theists. There does not seem to be any single objection to the view that will suffice, all by itself, to remove it as a serious contender. (The vastly over-hyped “problem of mind-body interaction” is certainly not such a decisive objection.) There is, however, a general awkwardness about the theory, a failure of fit between the theory and the role it needs to play - or so I will argue.

This awkwardness arises directly from the failure of versions 1.0 and 1.5. In those versions of dualism, the special creation of each human soul by God is made plausible because of the unique role humans are taken to occupy in the creation taken as a whole. Humans alone are in the image of God. For humans alone is it the case that God not only beneficently creates the circumstances that enable them to flourish as a species, but condescends to relate personally to them, to offer guidance, support, and fellowship to individual persons. Viewed in this light, the creation of each human soul individually by God is merely the initial instance of the special concern God has for human persons at all stages of their existence.

We have seen, however, that it is not feasible to assert that humans, and only humans, are endowed with souls by their creator. Souls are an essential ingredient in the entire realm of life and consciousness; this includes insects, if we credit our natural response to being pursued by yellow bees,<sup>1</sup> and it may include even simpler, less impressive forms of animal life. Can we really be happy with the notion of God creating untold billions of souls for each and every one of the bugs in the world, as he will then need to do? It is not that God is unable to do this, but there is something jarring about the prospect. What would we think of a manufacturing process that produced huge numbers of virtually identical items, but required the special attention of a human craftsman to make a required modification to each item? Wouldn't we think a better-designed process should have been able to do without all this hands-on involvement? The difficulty is not merely that this view makes God too busy; it also makes nature very seriously incomplete. There is all this marvelous array of millions of different species of animals, surviving and thriving under a wide range of environmental conditions – but unable, in fact, ever to replicate themselves in a single instance without special divine assistance! Not, I

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1. If on the other hand, one is inclined to resist the evidence for consciousness in insects, the present argument can still go through. In that case, the argument will need to focus on creatures concerning which the evidence of consciousness is less controversial; perhaps mammals and birds.



submit, a really impressive picture!

We might also wonder, what happens to all these buggy souls when the insects have ended their short lives? There is, it seems, not merely a problem of soul-creation, there is a corresponding problem of soul-disposal! Perhaps we need not follow Descartes in his assumption that souls would be naturally immortal, but why would a soul directly created by God be subsequently dependent on physical circumstances for its continued existence? Many (not all) versions of Cartesian dualism assert that humans do not *have* souls; rather, we *are* souls, which happen to be joined with our respective bodies (Swinburne, 2019). We are essentially immaterial beings, only contingently embodied, so if frogs, spiders, and worms have souls they also are essentially immaterial. Contrary to our assumption of animal mortality, the idea of a ghostly yellow bee that survives being swatted begins to look like a serious possibility.

The incongruity comes out even more starkly when evolution is introduced into the picture. There is no doubt that Cartesian dualism and evolution do not pair easily with one another. Evolution presents us a picture in which mind and organism co-evolve so as to produce, over very long periods of time, the complex structures and behavior we find in humans and, to a lesser degree, in some other organisms. But with each soul specially created by God, the evolution of the soul, strictly speaking, is ruled out. How then is the process supposed to work? Perhaps the most feasible scenario is that for each new kind of creature God both supernaturally effects the genetic transformation and also creates the new, more advanced soul. This, however, amounts to abandoning entirely the notion of evolution as a *natural* process, which is hardly an attractive solution.

The overall theme in all of these objections is that Cartesian dualism, by insisting that mind and consciousness can exist only through direct divine intervention, creates a chasm between the soul and the rest of nature that fits poorly with the facts of the world as we know them.

### **Transition to Emergent Dualism**

At this point, I used up fully half of the space devoted to my paper advocating emergent dualism - and so far, emergent dualism has barely been mentioned! Nevertheless, I believe this is a reasonable way to proceed. Emergent dualism is not an idea that immediately occurs to one as a plausible account of the nature of the mind. The very idea of emergence, in a form that does not eventually yield to reductionism, is a difficult one for many thinkers. Only after considering some of the more readily accessible alternatives, and seeing

their weaknesses, does strong emergence begin to seem a reasonable option. So let us see whether this view can provide plausible answers where the others surveyed cannot.

## What Is Emergent Dualism?

The fundamental idea of emergent dualism can be stated briefly. The mind/soul is an *emergent mental substance*, which is generated and sustained by the functioning of the brain and nervous system (or analog thereof) of a suitably complex organism. This however creates further questions: What is emergence, and how does emergence function in emergent dualism? What are the advantages of emergent dualism, as compared with other views concerning the origin of souls? And finally, is emergent dualism possible?

## The Nature of Emergence

I have explained the idea of emergence as follows:

The basic idea of emergence is that, when certain elements are assembled and related to each other in a certain way, something new and surprising can appear - something we would not have anticipated, merely on the basis of what we knew beforehand about the elements. Yet the new thing is not “added from the outside,” as is the case with creationism; rather, it appears as a natural consequence of the elements in their combination and relationship. There are many candidates for emergence in the natural sciences: examples include the emergence of complex crystalline structures out of material that formerly had no such structure and the emergence of elaborate group behavior from swarms of insects that individually give no evidence of such behaviors. Applied to the human mind, emergentism implies that consciousness, thought, rational volition, and so on make their appearance naturally as a result of the structure and functioning of the human brain and nervous system (Hasker, 2018, p.65).

It is important to note that emergence comes in a number of different varieties. For present purposes, there are two that are especially important; one of these may be termed *ordinary causal emergence*. This is the case where the emergent behavior, while perhaps novel and in a sense unexpected, can be explained and predicted on the basis of properties possessed by the elements outside of the situation in which emergence occurs. This is undoubtedly the case with crystalline structures; these structures are fully explainable in terms

of the molecular properties of the substances which crystallize. And the group behavior of insects is explained in terms of behavioral propensities possessed by the individual insects. Ordinary causal emergence is ubiquitous in the natural world, and while it may be important in many scientific contexts it raises no particular philosophical concerns.

Quite different, however, is the *emergence of novel causal powers*. Here the behavior of the ensemble of elements is *not predictable or explainable* on the basis of properties the elements exhibit outside of the emergence situation. Some have termed such emergence “brute,” but that is not entirely correct. There must be, in such cases, laws stating the circumstances under which the new powers emerge; in this sense, the event of emergence is not entirely opaque. Evidence for such laws, however, can be found only within the emergence situation itself. If we assume that the emergence of consciousness is of this kind, that emergence could not be predicted on the basis of what can be observed about the brain outside of the situation where consciousness arises.

Two observations are pertinent at this point. First, the question as to which of these types of emergence is applicable will depend on what is known concerning the laws governing the behavior of the elements. Many phenomena concerning chemical compounds (for instance, the liquidity of water at room temperature) were not predictable on the basis of nineteenth-century chemistry, but have become amenable to prediction in the light of quantum mechanics. Claims concerning novel causal powers, then, remain provisional so long as the possibility exists that a more developed theory of the elements could be discovered that would render predictable behavior that at present cannot be explained. One can be confident that “strong emergence” has occurred when the very nature of the laws previously available is such as to preclude an explanation for the emergent phenomena; this of course has been claimed to be the case for the phenomena of mind.

The other observation is that we need to be careful not to make unfounded and unwarranted claims on behalf of emergence. It can be tempting to take examples of ordinary causal emergence (the examples are abundant, as noted), and use these examples to support claims of more ambitious types of emergence, such as the emergence of novel causal powers. One thus arrives at a worldview in which emergence is everywhere, but the warrant for such sweeping claims is lacking.

Given this brief account of emergence, how does emergence function in the theory of emergent dualism? There are at least three kinds of phenomena for which strong emergence seems to be required. First, there is the emergence of *consciousness itself*. It is in fact very difficult even for materialists to deny that

consciousness is emergent unless they are willing to affirm either eliminative or strongly reductive varieties of materialism. Second, there are the powers to perform various *mental acts*, acts involving norms and purposes. One example mentioned above concerned truth-seeking behavior, but there are many others, and purpose-driven mental acts are certainly not limited to human beings. But finally, and most strikingly, emergent dualism posits the emergence of a *mental substance*, a *new individual entity* that is not composed of the elementary particles of physics. The reasons for this latter supposition include, in particular, the unity-of-consciousness argument mentioned previously, which claims that no purely physical entity can qualify as the subject of conscious experience.

The fact that there are these three categories of phenomena that come about as a result of emergence need not imply that there are three distinct sorts of emergence-events. Here is one way of thinking about the matter: fundamentally, what emerges is the mental substance, the “soul” if you please. This mental substance possesses intrinsically the power to be/become conscious - to have conscious experiences - under the appropriate circumstances, as well as the power to perform the sorts of mental acts appropriate to the kind of organism in question. The circumstances under which the mind/soul continues to exist and to function will normally include the continued life and functioning of the supporting organism. However, the mind/soul is logically distinct from the physical organism, so it is not logically ruled out that the self could continue to exist and function apart from the organism in some situations. (We will come back to this later on.)

### **Benefits of Emergent Dualism**

In the light of this brief summary of emergent dualism, what are the benefits of the theory? To begin with, it is free from the various objections that have been raised here against competing theories. Unlike idealism, it is firmly committed to realism concerning the physical realm; there is no need for circuitous maneuvers to account for the practical success of our ordinary and scientific ways of viewing the environment. Unlike materialism, it readily accepts the reality of our mental life, which is built into the theory at the ground level. Emergent dualism accepts at face value the teleological, or purpose-driven, nature of many of our mental states, as well as the effectiveness of those states in guiding behavior (thus, “mind-body interaction”). With its emergent mental substance, emergent dualism has a clear answer to the question of what it is that enjoys conscious states and is the source of mental acts - an answer that even non-reductive varieties of materialism are lacking, as the unity-of-

consciousness argument shows.

Unlike materialism, then, emergent dualism satisfies the requirements for a theory of free will, as set out previously. The reasons for affirming libertarian free will cannot be set out fully here; that is a long story in itself. I make only two points. First, it is evident upon reflection that, in our dealings with the world, we assume at many points that our lives can go forward in two or more different ways, depending on what we choose to do, and that it is entirely up to us, at the time when we make the choice, how things shall proceed.<sup>1</sup> This, I submit, amounts to a deliverance of common sense, something that ought to be rejected only for the most compelling reasons (see: Nagel, 1986; Searle, 1984). Second, if we are theists we have additional weighty considerations in favor of affirming free will. To mention only one of these: for theistic determinists, it is virtually inescapable that God, who has set up all of the causal sequences that determine how the world's history has developed, is *entirely pleased* with the world as it is, has been, and will be - if not, he would not have chosen to make it so. But this conclusion, while theoretically possible, is sharply in conflict with the teachings of all of the major theistic religions, including Judaism, Christianity, and Islam; all these faiths insist that there are some things about the world's history - in particular, about the actions of human beings - with which God is not at all pleased.

Emergent dualism clearly acknowledges both the existence and the importance of our conscious mental life, in contrast with materialism which has to introduce these phenomena "by the back door," so to speak, in a world which is supposed to be wholly physical. It readily acknowledges that our mental states and actions, and in consequence thereof many of our physical performances, are influenced by the propositional content of our beliefs and by the goals and purposes that animate so much of our mental lives - things that are not possible if we affirm the materialist doctrine of "causal closure of the material domain." In the emergent mind/soul, it has the core of the "unified self" which is so difficult to find in a mere collection of material particles. In all of these respects, it opens the way for the affirmation of free will, whereas materialism creates difficulties for each of these points. As noted previously, materialists very seldom affirm free will in the libertarian sense. If they affirm free will at all, they are usually compatibilists. Compatibilism, however, fails to satisfy our common-sense belief in free will, and when combined with

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1. In saying this, I endorse the requirement of "alternative possibilities" for a proper account of free will. My response to the "Frankfurt counterexamples" is to embrace the "flicker-of-freedom" strategy. For an excellent survey and analysis of contemporary options in free will theory see: Tempe, 2013.

theism it has seriously objectionable consequences, as noted above.

To be sure, these advantages over materialism are shared by other dualist views of the mind, including Cartesian dualism. But emergent dualism also has important advantages over other dualist views. It contrasts favorably with creationist dualism in the form of Cartesian Dualism 2.0. A major advantage here is that it posits the origin of souls as a natural part of the normal functioning of the natural world; it does not present to us a world in which even the simplest creatures are unable to reproduce themselves absent a special act of divine intervention. The world does not come to be independent of its Creator in consequence of this. Everything that there is in the world speaks to us of the Creator's wisdom and is maintained from moment to moment by God's energizing power. It is jarring, however, to be told that even an extremely common event such as animal reproduction requires a miracle, a special divine intervention that goes beyond the workings of the ordinary laws of nature. Emergent dualism, in avoiding the need for such ubiquitous miracles, places itself in a much stronger position than Cartesian dualism. Emergent dualism also aligns itself with common sense in readily allowing for the death of animals (animal mortality): the emergent animal soul depends for its continued existence on the biological functioning of the body and ends when that functioning ceases.

One of the more striking, and surprising, benefits of emergent dualism is that it allows itself, more than competing theories, to be combined fruitfully with the theory of biological evolution. That emergent dualism is better than Cartesian dualism in this respect is not a surprise; we have already noted that evolution does not comport well with the origination of each individual soul in a special act of divine creation. What is more surprising, however, is that emergent dualism enjoys an important advantage in this respect over the currently popular varieties of materialism.

The problem posed by evolution for materialism is that, on materialistic assumptions, *mental events have no causal consequences and are thus invisible to evolutionary selection*. A mental event consists of some substance instantiating a mental property or entering into a mental relation. Materialistic views, as we have noted, typically assume the "causal closure of the physical domain," which implies that the physical characteristics and responses of the organism are *completely accounted for by other physical events*, so there is no independent role left for mental events to play. The selection pressures are entirely physical in nature, so they can operate only on physical features of the situation, not on any mental events that may happen to be going on. Since natural selection does not operate on our beliefs and our reasoning processes, it can play no role in explaining how we come to have the knowledge that

we do in fact have. But a theory of mind that cannot explain this is in deep trouble.

It should be noted, furthermore, that this problem is not resolved by assuming, as some forms of materialism do, that mental events are identical with certain physical events. On this assumption, mental events and physical events are not distinct events but rather the same event viewed in two different aspects. However, given causal closure, it is *only the physical characteristics* of the mental-physical event that determine the outcome; the physical characteristics and responses of the organism are completely accounted for (setting aside quantum indeterminacy) by the conjunction of physical antecedent conditions and physical laws, so there is no independent role left to be played by the mental characteristics of those events. The “mental facts” are thus invisible to evolutionary selection, which therefore can play no role in enabling us to develop a more accurate understanding of the world. To overcome this difficulty, the materialist dogma of causal closure must be rejected, and it must be acknowledged that the propositional content of our mental states can have an effect on the actions of the individual and therefore on the future state of the world.<sup>1</sup> Emergent dualism affirms that this is indeed the case.

### **Emergent Dualism and Life After Death**

But what about life after death for human beings? If bodily death leads to extinction of the soul for animals, would this not be the case for humans as well? It might be so, but there are other possibilities. Since the mind/soul has an existence of its own, logically distinct from that of its generating body, it is at least logically possible that the mind continues to exist after the body is destroyed. For this to happen, however, the mind apparently would need to find another source for the support that was previously provided by the generating organism. The neurologist Wilder Penfield once wrote, “Whether there is such a thing as communication between man and God and whether energy can come to the mind of man from an outside source after his death is for each individual to decide for himself. Science has no such answers” (Penfield, 1975, p.215). We must agree with Penfield that science does not have an answer to this. It may just be worth mentioning, however, that research on near-death experiences seems to provide evidence that, under

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1. This is not to say that natural selection, all by itself, can provide a sufficient explanation for human rationality. But it almost certainly provides a necessary part of any such explanation.

certain conditions, the mind can continue to be active during periods when it lacks its normal physiological support. A good many NDE reports include accounts of sensory experiences which are said to accurately report events that occurred during periods in which the subject's heart had stopped, and even during "flat EEG" periods in which there was no detectable brain activity (Moreland & Habermas, 1998). These reports are to be sure controversial, but the weight of evidence is such that they cannot readily be dismissed. However, the rest of what is said here on behalf of emergent dualism does not depend on evidence of this sort.

If unembodied survival is possible, so is resurrection. If it is possible for the mind/soul/self to be sustained in existence in an extraordinary way subsequent to bodily death, it is also possible for it to be provided with a renewed body that would support the still-living mind in a way similar to what was the case during the person's pre-mortem life.<sup>1</sup> Clearly we are dealing here, considered philosophically, with speculation, but there is nothing that requires the emergent dualist to abandon the hope of "the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come."<sup>2</sup>

### **Is Emergent Dualism Possible?**

It has been argued that emergent dualism is in a favorable position in comparison with other leading views that have been considered. But is emergent dualism even possible? Doubts about this will center precisely on the origin of souls. Is it possible for a material organism to generate an immaterial soul? Would this not, in effect, be a case of creation *ex nihilo*, and thus the usurping of a divine prerogative? This need not be the case, however. Emergent dualism does not as such involve any stipulation concerning the precise way in which the emergent mind comes into existence. It is not ruled out, for example, that the appearance of the new substance involves a *transfer of energy* from the physical organism. Nor does emergent dualism rule out some form of panpsychism, in which there is a mental aspect to every bit of matter, those aspects somehow becoming combined in order to form the emergent mind. Furthermore, in generating the emergent mind the organism is fulfilling a

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1. It has been objected that the new body would generate a mind of its own, and so could not provide embodiment for the mind of the person who previously died. This could be avoided, however, if the body is, so to speak, *built around* the already-existing mind, and specifically adapted to support and energize it. There would then be no second mind generated by the "resurrection body," needing to be displaced by the mind of the person who had previously died.

2. These are, of course, the closing words of the Nicene Creed.



divine purpose built into the nature of matter by the Creator, so it is difficult to see that doing this would constitute a usurpation of divine prerogatives. In view of this, the problem about creation *ex nihilo* can reasonably be dismissed.

Nevertheless, opinions about the possibility of such emergence will continue to differ, and it is difficult to see how they can be resolved. I suggest, however, that we might better approach the topic in a different direction, in terms of the scope of divine power. Here are two questions we might ask:

1. Is it possible for God to create a universe in which (a) many different kinds of animals<sup>1</sup> having sensory and other experiences evolve from a starting point consisting entirely of inorganic matter; and (b) these animals are capable of reproducing themselves, given the continual divine support for the entire natural order, but without specific divine intervention in each individual case?
2. If the answer to question #1 is Yes, would it be a good thing for God to create a universe of this sort, as opposed to one lacking these features?

I suggest we respond first to the second question. What might those alternative universes be like? They could be universes lacking the animals, or in which those animals are mere automata, lacking the sorts of experience we “mental realists” suppose the animals to have. Or, they might be universes in which there are indeed animals, but in which the animals require special divine intervention, in the form of the creation of souls, in order to reproduce. Given this understanding, I believe it is reasonable to give an affirmative answer to the second question: it is very plausible that a universe of the sort described would be preferable to the alternatives.

But if the answer to question #2 is Yes, it follows that, other things being equal, it would be a *good thing* for God to have the power described in question #1. That is, this is the sort of power one would expect to be possessed by a “being than which nothing greater can be conceived.” This of course is contingent on the power in question being logically possible, but we should require a compelling argument to show that such a power is *not* logically possible; vague doubts about *how* such creation might be possible will not suffice. We have no right or expectation to be able to understand how God does what God does.

If then the answer to question #1 is Yes, then the arguments deployed

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1. Here I intend by “animals” creatures which actually have the sorts of experiences mentioned, *or* are of the kinds such that we normally suppose them to have such experiences, even if they do not actually have them.

earlier come into play. God would not have created a universe in which animals never evolve; we know this because he has not in fact done so. Nor would he have created the universe of Cartesian Dualism 1.0, in which animals are mere automata. God would not have created the universe of Cartesian Dualism 2.0, in which animal reproduction requires a continual series of divine miracles. And he would not have created a materialistic universe, since in such a universe there are no minds to be the subjects of experiences nor, if there were minds, would they have the resources to act in ways that are either rational or purpose-driven. As a matter of common sense, then (supplemented by some compelling philosophical arguments), God would have created the universe of emergent dualism. And that, I submit, is just what God has done.



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