

Engaging the skeptics on the soul

Are there strong
arguments
against the
existence of the
soul?



*See the
lesson from
2022*

“Engaging the
Skeptics on the
Soul”





THE

HOW WE KNOW IT'S REAL
AND WHY IT MATTERS

SOUL

J. P. MORELAND



Nancey Murphy

Fuller Theological Seminary

“Science has provided a massive amount of evidence suggesting that we need not postulate the existence of an entity such as a soul or mind in order to explain life and consciousness.”

JUNE 25, 2001

TIME

SPIELBERG'S A.I.
THE SECRET IS OUT

HOW THE UNIVERSE WILL END

Peering deep into space
and time, scientists have just solved
the biggest mystery
in the cosmos



www.time.com AOL Keyword: TIME

Michael Kinsley

“These [embryos] are microscopic groupings of a few differentiated cells. There is nothing human about them, except potential—and, if you choose to believe it, a soul.”

Substance Dualism (implied by the Bible)

- A human being is a composite of body and soul/mind/spirit.
 - The brain is a physical thing that has physical properties, and the mind is a mental substance that has mental properties.
 - Mental events (sensations, propositional attitudes, purposings, memories) are real, and the thinking subject has private access to it.
-



Physicalism (implied by evolution)

- A human being is a merely physical entity. Each of us is a body, including a brain, a central nervous system, etc.
 - All apparently mental events can be explained totally as a stream of physical events.
 - No material thing presupposes or requires reference to consciousness for it to be characterized.
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Property Dualism (Epiphenomenalism)

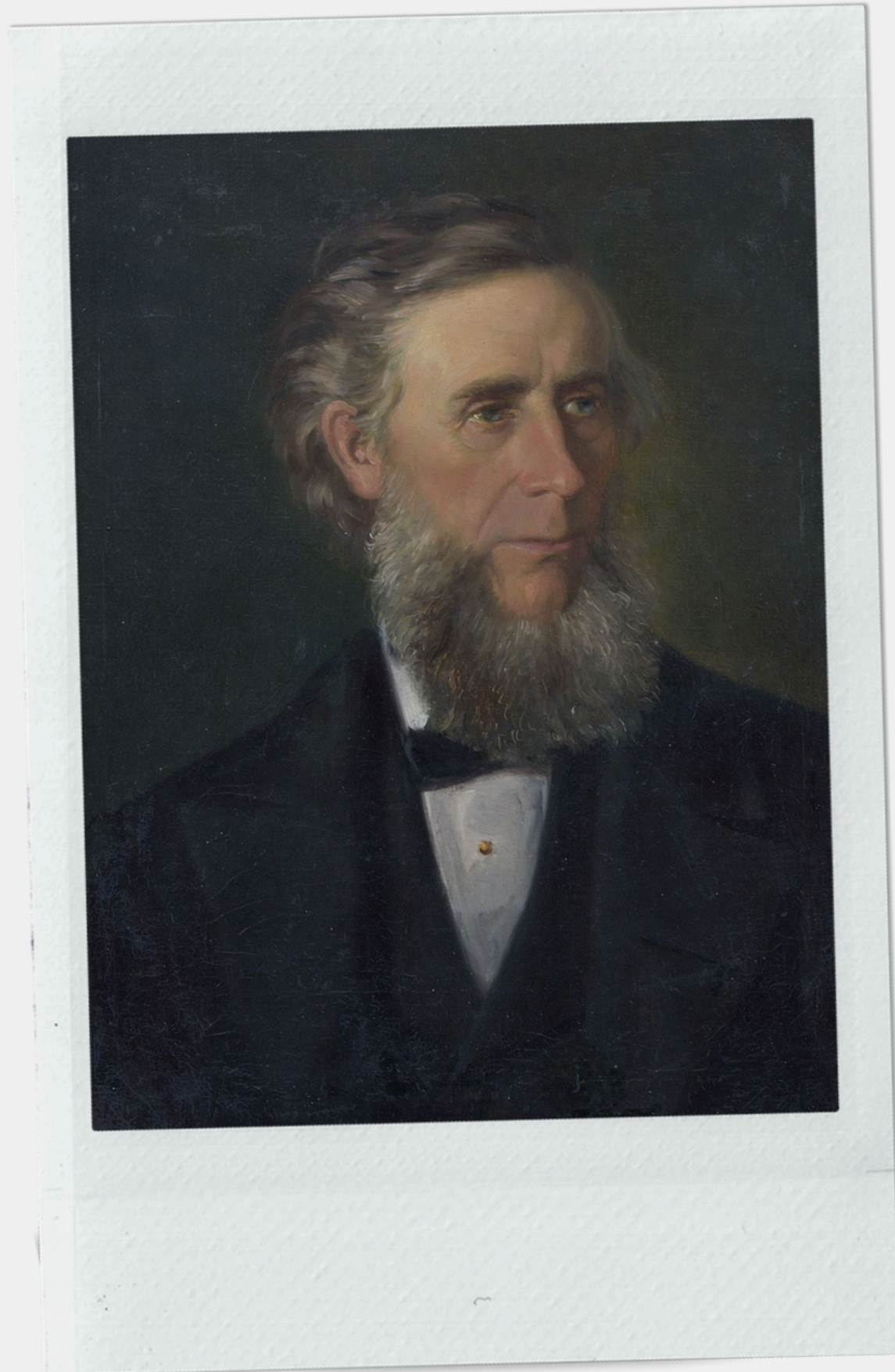
- The mind is not identical to the body, but the mind is to body as smoke is to fire. In other words, the mind is a by-product of the brain, and **mind causes nothing**; the mind merely “rides” on top of brain events.
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**All three positions accept
the same scientific data.**



Example:
Mirror neurons and empathy

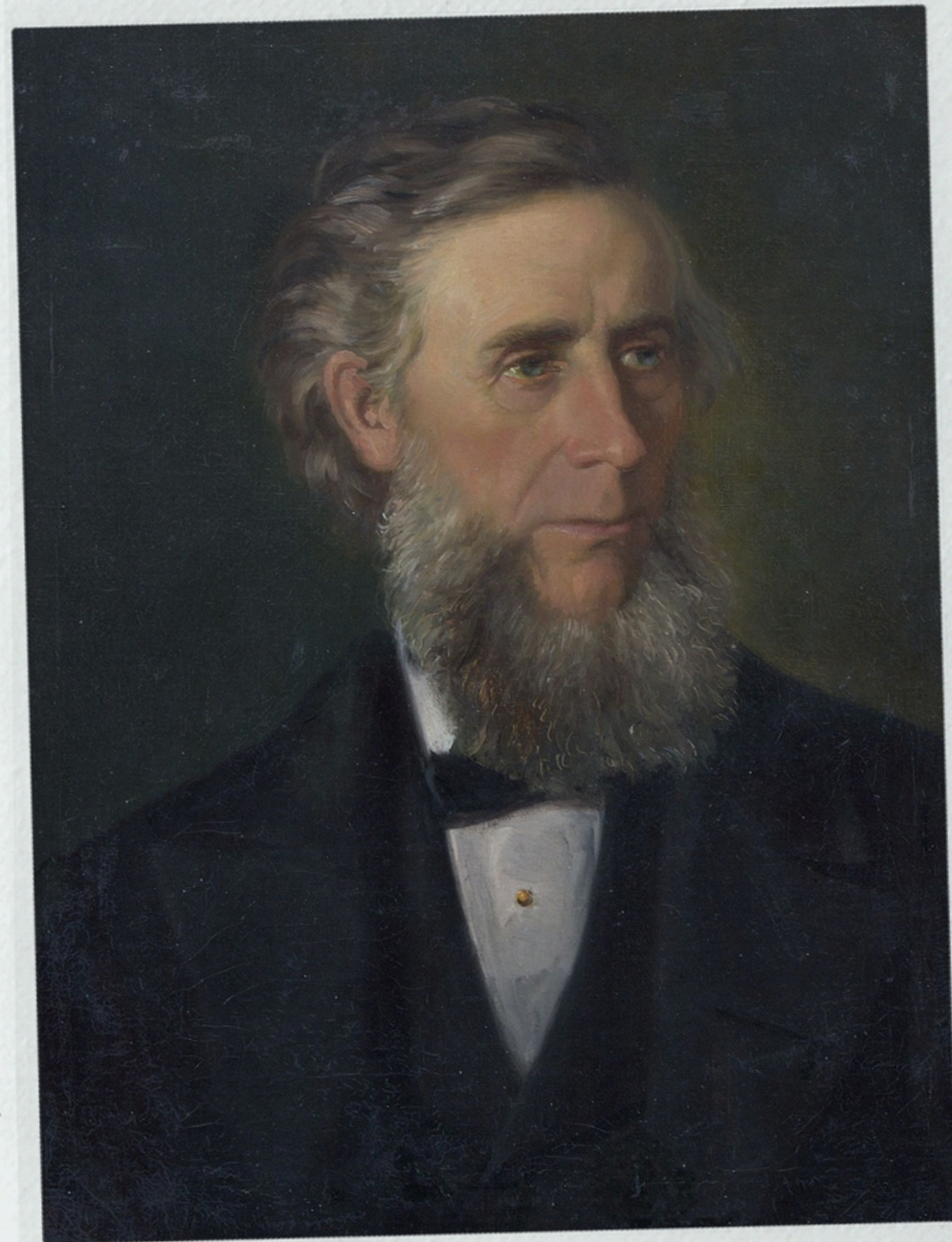




John Tyndall

Physicist (1820-1893)

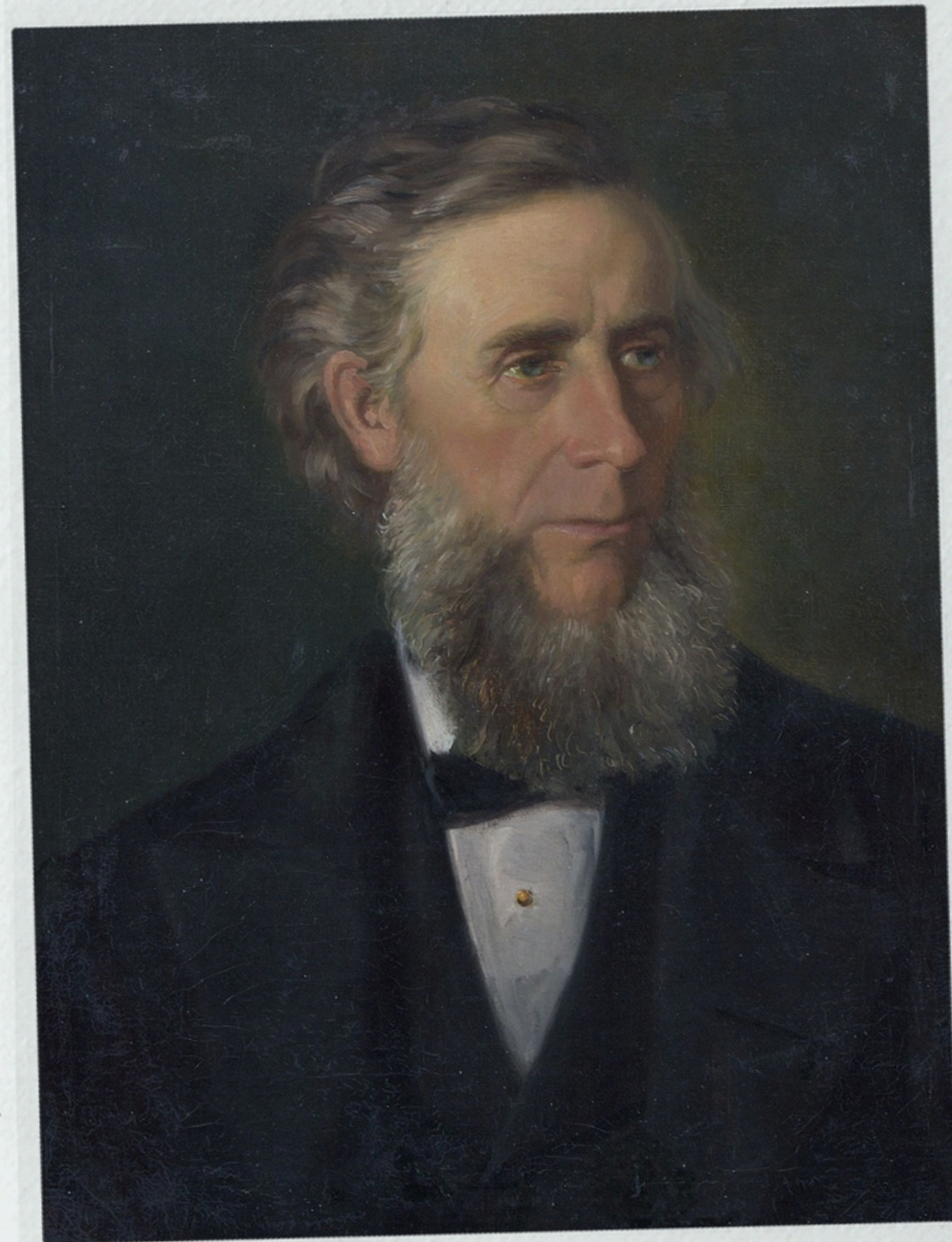
“The chasm between the two classes of phenomena [brain states and thoughts] would still remain intellectually impassable.”



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Physicist (1820-1893)

“Let the consciousness of love, for example, be associated with a right-handed spiral motion of the molecules of the brain, and the consciousness of hate with a left-handed spiral motion.



John Tyndall

Physicist (1820-1893)

“We should then know, when we love, that the motion is in one direction, and, when we hate, that the motion is in the other; but the ‘WHY?’ would remain as unanswerable as before.”

CEREBRAL CORTEX

Francis Crick and Christof Koch: The nature of consciousness is “a philosophical problem, and so best left to philosophers.”

Physicalism's three central claims

1. There is a strong correlation between physical events and apparently mental events.



Problems for the correlation argument

- **Correlation is not necessarily identity** (pollen may cause me to sneeze, but pollen is not a sneeze).

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Ancients knew nothing about modern neurology, but they knew that a person who loses an eye would not be able to see. They did not conclude that the eye literally sees.

Problems for the correlation argument

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 - **One may change his position about the reality of the mental and retain his beliefs about neuroscience.**
-

NEW DELUXE EDITION
WITH DVD



PROOF *of* HEAVEN

*A Neurosurgeon's Journey
into the Afterlife*

EBEN ALEXANDER, M.D.

With a New Afterword on the Lessons of Heaven

Dr. Eben Alexander believed that the brain generated and possessed states of consciousness. However, after his near-death experience, Alexander believed that the soul possessed consciousness, and that the various mental states are in two-way causal interaction with the brain.

Problems for the correlation argument

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 - **One may change his position about the reality of the mental and retain his beliefs about neuroscience.**
 - **Mental events have many attributes that show them to be distinct from physical events.**
-

A portrait of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, a German philosopher, mathematician, and scientist. He is shown from the chest up, wearing a dark, curly wig and a dark coat with a white cravat. The portrait is set within a white border, resembling a Polaroid print.

Leibniz

Law of the identity of indiscernibles

- For any entities x and y , if x and y are identical (they really are the same thing), then any truth that applies to x will apply to y as well.
- If we could find even one thing true of x that is not true of y , then x cannot be the same thing as y .

Unique features of the mental

- There is a **raw, qualitative feel** to having a mental state such as pain or joy.
 - Many mental states have **intentionality**.
 - Mental states are **inner, private, and immediate** to the subject.
 - Mental states fail to have crucial features that characterize physical states and **cannot be described using physical language**.
-

Unique features of the mental

- Mental states are necessarily owned by the **first-person subjects** who have them.
 - Mental events include a **unified visual field**, or a unitary awareness of the external world (not just a series of unconnected perceptions).
 - Mental events include **free choices** (this “agent action” conflicts with epiphenomenalism; a person is not just a series of states or events in a causal chain that passes through him).
-

Physicalism's three central claims

2. Mental events
can be reduced to
physical events.



Physicalistic theories of how mental events are reduced to physical events:

- **Individual or property ontological reduction** (particularly type-identity physicalism)
 - **Functionalism** (mental properties are described purely in terms of outputs)
 - **Eliminative materialism** (mental terms are relics of folk psychology)
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Problems with type-identity physicalism

- It is obvious that mental and physical properties are not identical.
 - It is obvious that a potentially infinite number of organisms with different physical-type states can all be in pain and thus the mental kind, being painful, is not identical to a physical kind.
-

Problems with functionalism

- Mental kinds are essentially characterized by their intrinsic properties and only *contingently* by their extrinsic, functional relations.
 - We get first-person knowledge of our own mental states, by introspection, not by observing our behavior.
 - Functionalism provides no clear sense as to how brain states “realize” mental states (e.g., that a rectangular piece of paper has economic value).
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Problems with eliminative materialism

- It is implausible that no one ever has actually had a sensation or belief.
 - Eliminative materialism advocates that the belief that there are no beliefs.
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Physicalism's three central claims

3. There is no good explanation for the interaction between the mind and brain.



Interaction does not derail dualism

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 - **There may be no mechanism there to explain.**
-

In the case of the key starting the car, there is an intermediate electrical system. In the case of the mind and body, there likely is no intervening mechanism.



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