

mechAnlsm of consciousness

The Whorl list — 6 messages, 4 voices, 20 Mar 2001

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/1277>

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Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 20 Mar 2001, 15:15

I think the [correct/best/proper] explanation of (eg) Rose's [memories/personality/consciousness/soul] [infiltrating into/integrating with] [that/those] of pMarble/Molybdenum] may be simpler than what [Shellac/Dan P] [suggests/proposes].

Who is to say, in a universe where [souls are (in some sense) demonstrable fact/consciousness can (apparently) exist independently of hardware], that the brain is the [sole/primary] seat of [soul/consciousness/memory/personality]? It makes a kind of sense that [it is/they are] [more distributed/less local] in the nervous system and perhaps other [organs/parts of the organism/tissues], particularly if one accepts that [it is/they are] at least partially [spiritual/non-physical/supernatural] in [nature/origin/constitution]. Then a(n) [organ/part/tissue] which has spent a significant time in one body, even if it is not an original [component/part] of that body, [may/will] "house" some [aspect/part/holographic image] of the [soul/memory/personalty/consciousness] [inhabiting/controlling] that body and, when [transferred/transplanted] to a [new/different] body may carry that [aspect/part/holographic image] to the [new/different] body.

On the contrary, allowing that "souls" specifically are [non-physical/spiritual/supernatural] in [cosntitution/nature] allows us to [suppose/believe/conjecture] that "souls" may habituate to their bodies (as they may habituate to a location, giving rise to phenomena such as Pike's ghost), and "hang around" remaininf functional [parts/organs/tissues] of the body after the death of the body proper, so that whatever aspect of [memory/personality/consciousness] attaches to the "soul" rather than physical [tissues/organs/parts] might in fact [transfer/travel] along with them and "inabit" the [new/different] body.

Now, isn't that ever so much simpler than [Dan/Shellac]'s ultraphysiclist explanation?

--[Dan'l/Blattid]

*This is WHORL, for discussion of Gene Wolfe's Book of the Long Sun.

Michael Straight — 21 Mar 2001, 09:07 · follows Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

On Tue, 20 Mar 2001, Dan'l Danehy-Oakes wrote:
Who is to say, in a universe where [souls are (in some sense) demonstrable fact/consciousness can (apparently) exist independently of hardware], that the brain is the [sole/primary] seat of [soul/consciousness/memory/personality]?

There is some diversity of opinion on this, but I think Catholic theology teaches that while the soul can have some kind of existence apart from the body, that a person isn't fully a person without a body (and not just "a brain")--thus the importance of the doctrine of bodily resurrection.

From there one can see Wolfe imagining (thought I doubt the church teaches) that something of

a person's "personness" resides in her body (not just her brain).

Other philosophers (essayist Wendell Berry comes to mind) have argued that when considering what makes a person who he is, it is impossible to draw a neat line between the brain and the rest of the body (the senses, organ systems, limbs all effect who we are) or perhaps even between a person's body and his physical and social environment.

Then too, Wolfe also may be drawing inspiration from fantasy/horror stories such as the ones where someone receives a transplant from a murderer and begins to have murderous impulses. Or the magic hand that will graft itself to the stump of a person's forearm, granting her great power but slowly remaking her in the image of the hand's original owner.

Magic, in any sufficiently advanced society, is indistinguishable from technology.

-Rostrum

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Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 21 Mar 2001, 09:01 · follows Michael Straight

Rostrum:

There is some diversity of opinion on this, but I think Catholic theology teaches that while the soul can have some kind of existence apart from the body, that a person isn't fully a person without a body (and not just "a brain")--thus the importance of the doctrine of bodily resurrection.

That isn't just Catholic, it's "mainstream" Christian teaching, though the details vary. I believe some Protestant & Evangelical groups talk about a succession of bodies -- i.e., the current body, some kind of non-physical body (which I find indistinguishable from no body at all) between current death and the general Resurrection, and the "Resurrection Body" afterwards. But in general, Christian groups subscribe to the Apostle's Creed and its clause "I believe...in the resurrection of the body." It was, I believe, C.S. Lewis, an Anglican, who observed that a human soul with no body was not a human but a ghost.

From there one can see Wolfe imagining (though I doubt the church teaches) that something of a person's "personness" resides in her body (not just her brain).

On the contrary, the Catholic church, at least, insists on the importance of the body in spiritual matters. We are not only spiritually but physically "the image of God," if only because God was incarnate as a Man. Further, it is by eating of His Body (in the Eucharist) that we are incorporated more fully into His Body. And the Church takes cognizance of the ways in which physical impairments (chemical, neurological, and other) can alter behavior and "personality."

To put it in slightly non-Catholic but Catholic-friendly terms: you can go out and buy a copy of Microsoft Word (or pick whatever software you like). But try running it without putting it onto a computer first. The software cannot function without the hardware. We are not spirits but spirits-in-bodies, spirits in a material world, and nothing in orthodox Christian teaching allows us to suppose that either the ghost or the machine is functional absent the other.

That said, Wolfe's speculations do go well beyond (though I believe that they do not actually go against) orthodox RC teaching when you get into conceptions like Marble "integrating" her "software" and that of Rose.

Other philosophers (essayist Wendell Berry comes to mind) have argued that when considering what makes a person who he is, it is impossible to draw a neat line between the brain and the rest of the body (the senses, organ systems, limbs all effect who we are) or perhaps even between a person's body and his physical and social environment.

Well, vide "the social construction of personality" (60s-ish psychology text by -- name forgotten: Timothy Leary's mentor) in this context. And grumble about calling Wendell Berry a philosopher; might as well call me one at that rate.

Which wanders around but manages not to have said: I agree.

Then too, Wolfe also may be drawing inspiration from fantasy/horror stories such as the ones where someone receives a transplant from a murderer and begins to have murderous impulses. Or the magic hand that will graft itself to the stump of a person's forearm, granting her great power but slowly remaking her in the image of the hand's original owner.

Is that "real" fantasy/horror? The only place I've run across that is in D&D, the "hand of Vecna." But I haven't read all the fantasy/ horror classics by any means...

Magic, in any sufficiently advanced society, is indistinguishable from technology.

Ummm. Magic is technology. But that's another debate.

--Dan'l

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E Dorian — 21 Mar 2001, 13:43 · follows Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

From: "Dan'l Danehy-Oakes" <ddanehy at siebel.com>

Date: Wed, 21 Mar 2001 09:01:19 -0800

murderer and begins to have murderous impulses. Or the magic hand that will graft itself to the stump of a person's forearm, granting her great power but slowly remaking her in the image of the hand's original owner.

Is that "real" fantasy/horror? The only place I've run across that is in D&D, the "hand of Vecna." But I haven't read all the fantasy/ horror classics by any means...

There was a movie released 10 years ago called Body Parts. It was a stupid horror movie, the plot of which was the following. A "mad-scientist" type doctor had a project where he would take body parts from convicted felons (death row folks, maybe? I don't recall the details), and graft/insert/affix/install them on/in/upon law-abiding citizens.

You can guess what happened. For example one man wakes up to find his new arm attempting to strangle his wife...

The movie is listed on Amazon: <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/6302270871/o/qid=985198009/sr=2-1/103-8761236-2403868>

Michael Straight — 21 Mar 2001, 13:56 · follows E Dorian

On Wed, 21 Mar 2001, Dan'l Danehy-Oakes wrote:

From there one can see Wolfe imagining (thought I doubt the church teaches) that something of a person's "personness"

resides in her body (not just her brain).

On the contrary, the Catholic church, at least, insists on the importance of the body in spiritual matters. We are not only spiritually but physically "the image of God," if only because God was incarnate as a Man. Further, it is by eating of His Body (in the Eucharist) that we are incorporated more fully into His Body. And the Church takes cognizance of the ways in which physical impairments (chemical, neurological, and other) can alter behavior and "personality."

I'm also reminded now of Catholic veneration of relics. If a leg bone of a saint is venerated and can be a source of miracles, then it implies that something of the saint's "personness" continues to inhere in his body even after the soul has departed.

And grumble about calling Wendell Berry a philosopher; might as well call `_me_` one at that rate.

Well, I just referred to philosophers and mentioned that he came to mind, not that he actually was one of the philosophers. It's just that his recent book "Life is a Miracle," has (in the context of a huge rant against E.O. Wilson's "Conciliance") one of the best articulations I've seen of arguments against regarding human beings as machines (but the arguments are not original to him).

And Berry may not be a professional philosopher but he writes engaging essays with important, insightful things to say that few people are saying. I'd take it as a great compliment to be put in his category.

Is that "real" fantasy/horror? The only place I've run across that is in D&D, the "hand of Vecna." But I haven't read all the fantasy/horror classics by any means...

It must be. D&D never came up with anything original, it was all stolen from something or other. And the transplanted murderer's body part has been used by Stephen King, and I think has been the subject of at least one horror movie. Don't know if that counts as "real" or not.

-Rostrum

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jmcazurin — 22 Mar 2001, 11:52 · follows Michael Straight

Rostrum wrote:

I'm also reminded now of Catholic veneration of relics. If a leg bone of a saint is venerated and can be a source of miracles, then it implies that something of the saint's "personness" continues to inhere in his body even after the soul has departed.

One might also say that it is the faith of venerator in physical relics that is the wellspring of miracles, and not the relics themselves.

Of course, the relics have first to perform a miracle before they get venerated. Chicken and egg problem?

I'm remembering Severian's observation about all claws being sacred claws.

Mikah
(my name seems to make me a chem)

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