

God Is In the Implementation Details

The Whorl list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 21 Mar 2001

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/1279>

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Dan Parmenter — 21 Mar 2001, 13:38

One of the other Dans aka Blattid writes (oddly):

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/personality/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 [constitution/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" remaining 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 "inhabit" the [new/different] body.

I'm not sure if our views are incompatible. I'm simply offering what seems like a plausible [implementation/realization] that satisfies me as a computational linguist. Clearly "distributed intelligence" is something that Wolfe is fascinated by, as well as the notion that consciousness can be consumed and integrated. But as an engineer I doubt that Wolfe would reject my hypothesis, though I freely admit that he probably didn't give the matter a whole lot of thought.

Of course if you're right, and if consciousness resides (at least partly) in the soul, then we must assume that Maytera Mint was wrong and Taluses do have souls. Are souls a consequence of consciousness?

I don't think there's any reason to not have both a "physicalist" explanation as well as a "dualist" view. I think it's quite Wolfean in fact.

From: Michael Straight <straight at email.unc.edu>
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).

[...]

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.

Yes, and let us not forget those Planarian Worms. Obviously Gene Wolfe has never quite gotten over that, even though it seems to have been a non-repeatable experiment. As I've no doubt mentioned before, this was also one of Alan Moore's central conceits in his take on SWAMP THING: Swampy is a plant that has consumed the consciousness of a dead scientist and grown a new body. By this mechanism he joined the ranks of the Earth Elementals/Green Men/etc.

Shellac

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