

# Why is everything material?

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In the meeting on October 16, I solved the mind-body problem by saying that there is no need to assume that the mind is immaterial. Instead, the intuition that the mind is immaterial can be understood as the result of the fact that we can't observe a mind with any of our five senses, and the reason for this is that a mind is private to the respective person.

Ana then asked me if I consider anything to be immaterial. I said "no", and I'd now like to provide a more detailed answer to Ana's intriguing question. After reviewing the mind-body problem, I'd like to consider the ideas of God and afterlife.

## **Mind-body problem**

The mind-body problem results from the assumption that the mind is immaterial, in which case we must explain how a material body can interact with its immaterial mind. This problem has never been solved, but I show that the problem is bogus by clarifying that the assumption that the mind is immaterial is unwarranted. Knowledge is given by the simplest model that explains what we wish to explain, and assuming that the mind is immaterial adds unnecessary complexity, the result of which is an unsolvable problem, namely, the mind-body problem.

If we stop and think about it, we realize that our intuition that the mind is immaterial is a result of the fact that we can't observe a mind with any of our five senses. Since we can't observe a mind with any of our five senses, we mistakenly assume that the mind must be immaterial. But once we notice that a mind is private and, hence, can be observed only internally by the respective person, we see that this is the reason that we can't observe a mind with any of our five senses. We can't observe another person's mind with any of our five senses, nor can we observe our own mind with any of our five senses. We can observe our mind only internally and privately.

Thus, the mind-body problem turns out to be a bogus problem because it is created by an unwarranted assumption, namely, that the mind is immaterial.

As mentioned above, Ana responded by asking if I consider anything to be immaterial, and I said "no". Although this question extends beyond the topic of mind, I wish to explain my answer a bit further because I'm concerned that it may worry some people. In providing this explanation, I draw on my comprehensive theory of human life, of which I gave an overview at the beginning of the discussion.

I think that there are two possible concerns about the claim that there is nothing immaterial: the existence of God and the existence of afterlife. I'd like to briefly consider each concern.

## **God**

Historically, the concept of God as immaterial comes from an ancient understanding of matter. Matter is associated with limitation and decay, so of course God must be immaterial. More recently, science has conceptualized matter in terms of subatomic particles, atoms, molecules, and chemicals. Surely God can't consist of subatomic particles, atoms, molecules, and chemicals!

However, Einstein's special theory of relativity transformed our understanding of the universe. Prior to this theory, physics dealt with matter and energy, conceptualizing the relation between the two. In the late 1800s, Irish physicist George FitzGerald proposed that matter is made of energy, and in 1905, Einstein

quantified this relation in his famous equation  $E=mc^2$ . With the special theory of relativity, it became clear that in the simplest model there aren't two fundamental phenomena — matter and energy — there is just energy, and the various forms of matter are nothing more than configurations of energy. A notable result of this insight is the atomic bomb!

Notice that the simplification of reducing matter to energy is similar to the simplification of reducing mind to body: there aren't two fundamental phenomena — mind and body — there is just body, and the various activities of the mind are nothing more than activities of the body.

Now, the special theory of relativity reduces matter to energy, but what is energy? Energy is nothing more than a name for the monistic substrate of the universe. As a result, the ancient need to assume that God is immaterial vanishes because under the special theory of relativity, the concept of material does not refer to limitation and decay — or to subatomic particles, atoms, molecules, and chemicals. Rather, under the special theory of relativity, the concept of material simply refers to the monistic substrate of the universe.

In assuming that God exists, accordingly, what is the relation between God and energy — the monistic substrate of the universe? Since God is the sole source of everything that exists, God is the ultimate monistic substrate of all that exists and, hence, of the universe. So energy reduces to God conceived as a substrate of existence, making God material.

A question then arises as to whether God — reality — behaves as a closed system or an open system with respect to energy. Under a closed system, there is a fixed amount of energy available, while under an open system, there is an unlimited amount of energy available. We can conceive of reality behaving as a closed system because there are no practical consequences of the limitations of a closed system when the closed system is reality as a whole. To illustrate, if God wanted to make 10 million universes instead of, say, 1 million, he could scale each to one tenth of its energy capacity, and since each would be self-contained, each would remain internally unchanged.

Historically, there has been concern to distinguish the God of western religion — Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam — from the God of pantheism. But in light of the foregoing, this concern vanishes with regard to the substrate of existence. What is of concern to western religion is the characterization of God as a person — an intelligent free agent. It is not a problem if God is also conceptualized as the monistic substrate of existence, namely, energy.

### **Afterlife**

Historically, the idea of afterlife has been associated with monotheism — Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam — and in this context we can readily see that afterlife does not depend on immaterial existence because we just deduced that God is material.

In my comprehensive theory of human life, I establish that afterlife does not actually depend on God and that there can be afterlife under atheism if the idea of afterlife is rational. There are some technical concerns to solve regarding the rationality of afterlife, but I believe that I have solved them. This does not establish that there is afterlife, only that it is rational. If the idea of afterlife is rational, what remains is to assess its probability, given what we know of human life.