



**Chrtc 390 Module 12 Slides
by Heather Looy and Paul
Flaman: Ordinary Religious
Experiences**

Body-Soul / Mind-Brain by Paul Flaman

Introduction

Nancey Murphy summarizes current options for accounts of the nature of the person as follows:

- 1) **Radical Dualism:** the soul is separate from the body; the person is identified with the soul;
- 2) **Holistic Dualism:** the person is a composite of body and soul but is identified with the whole whose normal functioning is a unity;
- 3) **Nonreductive Physicalism:** the person is a physical organism whose functioning in society and in relation to God gives rise to 'higher' human capacities as morality and spirituality;
- 4) **Eliminative/Reductive Physicalism:** the person is a physical organism whose experiences will all ultimately be explained by the physical sciences.

She thinks positions 1 and 4 are incompatible with Christian teaching.

Mind/Brain: Heather Looy's Slides adapted by Paul Flaman

- Soul properties:
 - reason, imagination, perception, consciousness = Mind
 - immaterial
 - energy?
 - subjective immateriality (e.g., like love, thoughts)?
 - of another substance than this physical cosmos?
 - can it exist separately, independently, of the body?
 - is a soul a *person*?
 - If properties of soul = properties of mind, and if these can be shown to require the structures and functions of the brain/body, then:
 - Is “soul” another word for “brain/body”?
- Brain/Body: the brain is central but it cannot function without a body in an environment.

Mind/Brain: Looy adapted by Flaman

- If mental states are simultaneously (always) brain/body states, then must we accept *reductive physicalism*?

- Considerations:

1. There are different kind of reductive physicalism: Crick's, Damasio's...
2. Some eminent neuroscientists have shifted towards various forms of dualism-- Eccles, Penfield, Penrose, Sperry ...
3. How can the immaterial interact with the material? (conservation of energy)
4. Science (natural): limited to the study of the physical, matter and energy; thus neuroscience only provides material explanations ; whether these explanations are complete or simply describe the material aspects of things cannot be determined by science itself
5. Data underdetermine the theory: the data can often be interpreted in more than one way. Consider one's worldview; Parsimony?
6. Human experience seems inconsistent with (some versions of) reductive materialism: free will, consciousness, personal/moral agency
7. We need to take seriously both evidence re: mind/brain links as well as human experience of consciousness, a freely-choosing "self"
8. Understanding of brain/mind relationships may be fundamentally limited. Can we fully know ourselves? Consider the "easy" and "hard " questions.

Body-Soul / Mind-Brain by Flaman

Introduction (focus primarily on Christian views)

- Beliefs: in life after death (cf. early human burial ... today--57 % Canadians believe this & 40 % experienced the presence of a deceased loved one; reincarnation (Buddhism ...); soul/spirit.
- Philosophy: various dualisms (Plato, Descartes, Eccles), monisms including emergent, hylemorphism (Aristotle), idealisms (Hegel), materialism (Marx, Crick), process thought (Whitehead) ...

Bible

- Hebrew/Greek *nepesh/psyche* (soul, self); *ruach/pneuma* (Spirit) ...; Relationships, salvation & bodily resurrection
- Some texts have been interpreted by many to support belief in an intermediate state between death and resurrection (e.g. Lk 23:43; Phil 1:23- 4; 2 Cor 5:6-10; cf. 2 Tm 2:17-18)

Christian Writers of the First Few Centuries

- Generally taught that the human soul is created by God, incorporeal & immortal, and does not pre-exist the body
- Engagement with Greek (e.g. Platonism) & Roman thought

Body-Soul / Mind-Brain by Flaman

Thomas Aquinas (13 the Cent.)

- The human soul is incorporeal and incorruptible
- The human person is a compound (unity) of body and soul
 - the soul is united to the body as its form, the principle by which we conduct every life activity; the whole soul is present in every part of the body (cf. God and the universe)
- Various activities need related powers
 - **Vegetative:** nutrition, growth, generation (cf. Plants)
 - **Sense/Animal:** outer and inner senses; locomotion and sense appetites; emotions (cf. Animals)
 - **Intellectual:** understanding and will (intellectual appetite--re invisible goods, e.g. truth, not perceptible to the senses)
- In humans the vegetative and sense powers have the body-soul compound as their subject; the intellectual powers have the soul alone as their subject (remain after bodily death); after death the saints experience the beatific vision and can pray for us ...
- We have real free will distinct from what happens beyond it

Body-Soul / Mind-Brain by Flaman

Catholic Teaching and Practice

- 4th Lateran Council (1215): God's creation includes spiritual angelic world, corporeal visible universe and human beings composed of spirit and body
- Council of Vienne (1311-12): the substance of the intellectual soul is the form of the human body
- 5th Lateran Council (1512-17): soul is immortal
- Vatican II, GS (1965): the body is good; recognizing a spiritual and immortal soul is profoundly true
- John Paul II (1996) re: evolution speaks of a physical continuity and an ontological leap / spiritual soul
- Catechism (1997), nn. 362-8: body and soul are not two natures -their profound union forms a single nature
- Consider the Canonization of Saints: do miracles related to their intercession confirm a disembodied state?

Body-Soul / Mind-Brain by Flaman

Karol Wojtyla (Pope John Paul II), *The Acting Person*:

- Distinguishes what we freely do/cause (action) and what happens in us. We infer the existence of the soul and its spiritual nature from effects that demand a commensurate cause: the person's transcendence (i.e. transcends various determinisms) in action; cf. also obligation, responsibility, truthfulness, self-determination, and consciousness;
- While the body itself is the source of the reactive dynamism, specific for the human soma, and indirectly also for the emotive dynamism of the human psyche, the integration of these two dynamisms has to have a common origin with the person's transcendence;
- The integration of the person in actions tells us that the soul-body relation cuts across all the boundaries we find in experience and that it goes deeper and is more fundamental than they are.

Consider, e.g., also Benedict Ashley, Karl Rahner, Hans Urs von Balthasar and Thomism

Body-Soul / Mind-Brain by Flaman

Orthodox Churches / theology

- Traditional dichotomy (body/soul) & mystery of the human being (cf. 1 Cor 13:9--we now know only partly; in the future ...)

Protestantism:

□ Reformation (16th Century):

- Luther & some radical Reformers - the soul either dies with the body or 'sleeps' until the general resurrection
- Calvin argued that the human soul is immortal; also accepted intercession of the saints but emphasized Christ's role

□ Today Protestant theologians are divided:

- Some defend the traditional dichotomy (body/soul)
- Some speak of body, soul & spirit (immortal) trichotomy
- Some emphasize the biblical unity of the person; bodily death as dissolution of the whole person until bodily resurrection (e.g., authors of *Whatever Happened to the Soul?* argue in favor of Nonreductive Physicalism—cf. Science / Philosophy)—see next 3 slides:

Nonreductive Physicalism: Looy adapted by Flaman

- An alternative to reductive physicalism/ materialism
- Nancey Murphy, Malcolm Jeeves and other Christian proponents (cf. Emergent monism: Ian Barbour; Arthur Peacocke)
 - theology: personhood historically seen as embodied, unified, not distinct substances (as in Descarte's view)
 - science: we are unified, but multi-aspectual (Damasio)

Theory:

- God is Creator, "Wholly Other": all is "God" or "not-God"
- humankind are creatures: unified, embodied, continuous with natural world; as Christians believe in resurrection of the body
- ability to have a relationship with God, image-of-Godness:
 - biological and cultural evolution, as intended by God, produced creatures with these capacities
 - not endowed with a separable, immaterial soul
 - part of the unified character of human nature

Nonreductive Physicalism: Looy adapted by Flaman

Theory cont'd:

- The organization and function of material elements that comprise our emergent mental properties (upward causality)
 - include our internal subjective experience, awareness, thought, memory, imagination
 - result in, and reflect, our social character: language, culture, intimacy, relationship
- mental properties and their products (e.g., culture) in turn can have *causal* influence (downward) on brain function
 - e.g., if I ask you to choose to conjure a visual image, this choice leads to a change in activity in visual areas of the brain

Nonreductive Physicalism: Looy adapted by Flaman

Theory cont'd:

- thus: mental properties require a particular physical architecture, but cannot be *reduced* or fully explained in those terms
- they have causal powers themselves
- also: environment, social context must be considered
- free will, agency, are real emergent properties of a brain developing and active in a particular environment
- With regard to human religious experience Murphy affirms that God (not part of the physical world) can interact with the physical world including the human brain.
- These Christian authors do not believe we have an immaterial immortal soul and so do not believe in an intermediate state but they do believe God will reconstitute us with the resurrection of the body.
- Some (John Cooper and Paul Flaman) raise a question: How can the identity of a person continue if there is no intermediate state of the human soul, a substantial part of the person, between bodily death and a future bodily resurrection?

Body-Soul / Mind-Brain by Flaman

Sir John Eccles (1903-1997)

- Neuroscientist, Nobel Prize winner ...
- **Dualist-Interactionism Hypothesis:** developed with Karl Popper (philosopher) and Friedrich Beck (physicist)
- The laws of physics, chemistry and biology can not explain our fundamental experiences of consciousness and free will (ability to control one's brain & actions); these require an immaterial self/soul (created by God) which survives death.
- The self at the quantum level interacts (two-way) with the neocortex without violating the laws of energy; it controls the brain by increasing the probability of exocytosis of presynaptic boutons (up to 100,000) on a neural unit or dendron (formed of a bunch of apical dendrites). Each dendron has a related *psychon* (unit of human experience).

Body-Soul / Mind-Brain by Flaman

Does one's view make any difference?

- Has dualism (all or some forms) contributed to seeing the body as bad or not important; sexism; speciesism - mistreatment of animals; and the ecological crisis?
- Does the view that all humans have a spiritual (immaterial) immortal soul strengthen the defence of the sanctity of life/ inherent equal dignity of all human beings including those with immature brain development (the unborn) and serious brain damage or disorders (the demented, etc.)?
- Christian mystics as Teresa of Avila speak of the possibility of the mystical union of the soul with God. If one has a spiritual (immaterial) soul does this allow for greater union with God who is Spirit (immaterial)?
- Which view/theory better fits the data of human experience, reason and Christian Revelation?