

Uneasy Partners: A Theological Dialogue with Daniel Dennett's Philosophy of Mind

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Abstract

The thesis sets out the goal of isolating Daniel Dennett's multiple draft model of consciousness from the rest of his theory of mind. This is done because while his eliminative materialism is obviously not compatible with Christian Orthodoxy the polyvalent mind that it supposes is ripe for theological interpretation. Dennett's theory of the mind encountered serious criticism from Maxwell Bennet and Peter Hacker in their book *Philosophical Foundations of Neuroscience* and the debate between Dennett and these authors is examined with the author ultimately siding with Dennett. Turning to Christian accounts of the self it is proposed that the use of the multiple draft model as hermeneutic device is extremely helpful in reading scripture, especially in the polyvalent conception of the self as found in the writings of Paul.

Important abbreviations

CE: *Consciousness Explained*

ET: Emergence Theory

MDM: Multiple Draft Model

IS: Intentional Stance

PFN: *Philosophical Foundations of Neuroscience*

N & P: *Neuroscience and Philosophy*

Diagrams

The Shield of the Self p. 57

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Introduction

If the study of Theology is an attempt to relate concepts of revelation, belief and Christian practice to all aspects of human existence then it is important that no domain of thought or inquiry remain outside the scope of theological reflection. As a theologian I have found it particularly important to examine the relation between the presuppositions of modern culture as particularly expressed through scientific thought. In the words of an erstwhile intellectual companion “The Christian is to resist the spirit of the world. But when we say this we must understand that the world-spirit does not always take the same form¹” In this respect much of what *is* being said which shapes culture in the West is now put forward by scientists. It would be foolhardy to assume that scientists themselves as specialists in a particular methodology would be ignorant to philosophical theories or the cultural consequences of their own work. Rather they are at the forefront of public intellectual discussion with figures such as Steven Pinker, and Jared Diamond holding a place of privilege alongside philosophers and political theorists in the shaping of societal goals and mores.

Science also offers an excellent partner for theological dialogue, particularly the field of cognitive neuroscience. This is because research into the functioning of the brain on an organic level runs parallel to research on the brain on a psychological level. Neurobiological discoveries have allowed for manipulations of the brain through

¹ Francis Schaeffer. *The God Who is There* (Chicago: Intervarsity Press, 1968) p. 31

mechanical (surgery) and now chemical means with the potential to genetically alter an individual being explored. Psychological developments especially from the behaviourist school have opened new avenues to explore the power of suggestion, influence and coercion. These are in turn mirrored by the academic reflection on the nature of the mind which leapt to the forefront of philosophy in the 20th century. Such reflections have influenced the connections societies make between conscious states and ethical decisions. As an example, we now believe that one of the main issues at stake in determining when to prolong a life by technological means is the ascription of some form of conscious state to the person in question. Terms such a permanent vegetative state and the distinction between brain death and physical death enter the conversation in ways unimaginable one hundred years ago. Moving forward, new questions will arise about the ethics of altering a person's genome (either in utero or as an adult) and new more "humane" ways of altering the mind of an individual which supposedly are better than primitive techniques such as lobotomies. Even in this brief sketch it is obvious that the topic of mind is filled with issues of ethics, personhood, interpretations of evolutionary biology (and psychology) and power dynamics. If theology ignores these dialogue partners it runs the risk of being out-narrated in scientific and ethical spheres just as it has been in the political.

This is not to say that philosophers, neuroscientists and psychologists are all striving towards a unified understanding of the mind in a harmonious fashion. This thesis will navigate a path through the thought of one particular philosopher of mind, Daniel Dennett, and on to the challenge of reading Scripture in the light some of his

claims regarding our understanding of consciousness. At issue is a challenge issued to the status quo of both neuroscience and most thinkers within philosophy of mind and the response which followed. That challenge was proposed by Maxwell Bennett and Peter Hacker in their 2003 book *Philosophical Foundations of Neuroscience* (hereafter PFN) which attacked some of the underlying claims in Daniel Dennett's own work. Bennett is a neuroscientist and Hacker a philosopher who works within a Wittgensteinian tradition. The debate between Dennett on one side and Bennett & Hacker on the other is engaged in order to use it as a heuristic device to examine tensions that underlie the whole concept of mind as a separate category which is the crux of the debate in between the two sides. The debate must be addressed in order to justify my choice of dialogue partner; it is not that the use of Dennett for theological reflection is predicated upon his triumph in the debate but that it is precisely at the point of encounter between these two sides that we encounter a fruitful tension.

It is the tensions in the debate which are instructive for the theologian since they reveal at a technical level some of the anxieties surrounding the supposed demystification of consciousness. For religious adherents this goes beyond the surface level of ethical decisions relating to consciousness all the way to the ontological grounding of the self and the concept of soul. As I will show this comes from a history of conceptual confusion regarding the terms that surround our language of the conscious experience being intertwined with concepts of body/mind/spirit, spirit/flesh, body/soul modalities. For Christians specifically and the Judaeo-Christian influenced West more generally this is owing to the sometimes confusing use of these terms in the letters of St.

Paul. The goal of this thesis is to demonstrate the dangers faced in accepting the mind/brain distinction insofar as it permits a deconstruction similar to that has been prefigured by the denial of Cartesian dualism. Reading Paul through Dennettian eyes will allow us to see more clearly Paul's vision of a unified self that in every aspect seeks God. The goal is not to present Dennett's claims as beyond criticism, but rather to see even in his Multiple Draft Model a way to retain the cogency of a Christian account of the self.

To be clear on my own methodology I will approach the topic from a stance grounded in a conception of science that owes much to Radical Orthodoxy's critique of secular modernity and its' universalizing of scientific materialism in all aspects of life². There will be certain choices, especially among the biblical exegetes I engage that reflect my own Evangelical tradition and clarify the chorus with which I wish to be identified. Nevertheless it is the Radical Orthodox combination of a *ressourcement* of Early Christianity with a rereading of the Post-Enlightenment era which refuses the marginalization of theology that provides the best toolkit for addressing the issues at hand.

The argument begins with an elaboration of tools useful to the eventual understanding of the thesis. From a discussion of the assumptions of modern sciences "fact" and the way they work to produce theories I will consider how this defines terms in the rest of the text. With that in hand I will find an antagonistic yet helpful partner in Daniel Dennett, especially in his Multiple Draft Model of consciousness. Known as a

² See especially Chapter 9 "Science Power and Reality" in John Milbank "*Theology and Social Theory* (2nd ed.)" (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006) pp.259-277

vocal supporter of the New Atheism movement his overall thought is rooted in a rabid materialism and will be resisted but his critiques of Cartesian dualism in both material and immaterial forms are not only insightful but have reached a wider audience than other eliminative materialist³ philosophers owing to his popular publications and as such require a response more urgently. The theory of consciousness sketched out in Dennett's book *Consciousness Explained* and other writings will form the second section of the first chapter. With that theoretical framework I will shift to the second chapter outlining the debate in the PFN and show how the battle fought by Hacker and Bennet should be a cautionary tale for Christians engaged in thinking about the mind/soul and validate my choice of Dennett as a productive theorist.

The third section briefly examines another theory of mind that one encounters in contemporary Christian scholarship, which has replaced old models of dualism with another model that posits the existence of an irreducible mind-construct in a school of thought loosely grouped under the name Emergentism. By highlighting that Christian philosophers and New Testament scholars hold views that are structurally similar to Hacker and Bennett's assertion that the brain and the mind ought not to be conflated I will show that these Christian accounts of the self are open to the same type of criticism as Dennett offers.

The last section is the most original. After the examination of Dennett's attacks on the concept of Mind as separate category not reducible to biology and using his assault on the PFN to highlight the dangers faced by Christians who propose similar

³ cf. Paul and Patricia Churchland, Valerie Hardcastle, George Rey and Michael Devitt

ways of understanding the self, I will read the Bible through Dennettian eyes. Perhaps the reason this is so novel is Dennett's rabid atheism causes many to foreclose prematurely on all of his academic work. Analogically, the move is akin to a midnight raid an enemy camp for materiel rather than a diplomatic encounter; certain of his ideas are extremely problematic for any theist and it would be foolish to assume that his entire project could be made congruent with Scripture. Nevertheless his MDM allows us to resist dualism while still giving a cogent account of a Biblical conception of the self, especially in reading the letters of Paul.

Understanding that Christianity has always been called to stand apart from the world but never ignorant of it I will propose that the Dennettian understanding of consciousness found in the Multiple Draft Model be accepted and analysed from a Christian perspective. Dennett asserts that his MDM is able to solve problems which cannot be answered by mind/body dualist philosophies and this same MDM provides clarity in understanding the various terms for the self used by Paul. This model which asserts the holistic view of the human person sans "ghost in the machine" is congruent with Scripture and furthermore the perpetual flux within such a consciousness is can be used to provide an analogical grammar of sanctification wherein competing mental routines are brought into harmony with one another. This will point to a larger dialogue which is beyond the scope of this thesis that would see a reinvigoration of an understanding of the soul that has its kernel in the Augustinian tripartite distinction of Memory, Will and Understanding.

Chapter 1

Anywhere you look within the field of scientific enquiry, or any discipline which purports to have explanatory powers, there are theories. They are a part of a taxonomy of ideas which attempts to explain the way the world works assuming normal causation of events⁴. At the base of this taxonomy is the simple fact; these are singular units of knowledge that give us information about something. The simplest of facts are so basic we often take them for granted. Thus we say that “Rome is a city in the European nation of Italy.” and call it a fact. What we really saying is that: there is such a thing as a city, there is such a thing as a nation, it is possible to delineate portions on the world into political units, there is a large unit which we name Europe, a smaller subset of this unit is called Italy, etc. Even this does not begin to delve into the “facts” involved in the transmission of such a fact through language or a printed medium. Our description of Rome is actually a composite fact and generally speaking when we are talking about facts this is what we mean. The end goal of all human academic disciplines is to attempt to make sense of some composite facts and try to find ways they interrelate. The attempt to explain the interrelation is colloquially called a theory, but is more precisely known as a hypothesis at the outset. As an example I could hypothesize that if I wore a particular pair of socks three days in a row and on each of those three days it rained then I was wearing special rainmaking socks. This hypothesis is almost akin to a thought

⁴ This concept relies on the basics of hierarchy theory *cf.* Herbert A. Simon. “The Architecture of Complexity” in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* , Vol. 106, No. 6 (Dec. 12, 1962) , pp. 467-482

experiment, it is an untested and unproven theory and as any statistician will remind you; correlation is not the same as causality. If on the fourth day, despite the protestations of my nostrils, I wore the same socks and then it did not in fact rain I would be forced to reconsider my hypothesis. If however on the fourth day and every day thereafter that I wore my socks it then proceeded to rain and yet on the days that I decided to not wear my socks it did not rain, then my hypothesis would make the semantic shift into a theory. Theories have explanatory powers which have been borne out by testing and are not contradictory to the facts available to the theorist. That is not to say that they are ironclad truths, perhaps upon further refinement of my testing it was determined that when I put my left sock on first it rained but by putting on my right sock it did not. This would lead to a revision of the theory which, although it does not completely falsify the first theory nor did it enshrine the new theory as absolute truth.

At the heart of this idea of refinement is the kernel of what a fact is. In a modern sense and especially within scientific empiricism it is coterminous with truth or objective reality. It is what Alasdair MacIntyre refers to as the mechanist view of fact, it is a neutral description of affairs in which "...is' becomes stranger to 'ought'⁵. This was not always so: the OED neatly tracks this cultural shift in its sparse but profound entry on the word as "a thing that is known or proved to be true" while also stating that its earliest use was actually a forensic term for an act or crime. The reason it existed as a legal term was that a condition for its validity was its verifiability; that is if something could not be proven by verification it was inadmissible in court proceedings.

⁵ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (3rd ed.) (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007) p.84

As a fact is concretized through repeated verification the best it can hope for is to approach truth asymptotically but with the possibility of total revision always an option. The asymptotic nature of this type of truth is still found in the instructions given to juries which ask them to decide “beyond a reasonable doubt” that a defendant is guilty. To state this again, in the modern sense a fact is a fact by virtue of its verifiability not its actual relation to any abstract absolute. In addition to the necessity of its verifiability a fact is now a unit of absolute truth rather than a useful juridical term as it was in its origins. Factual knowledge was at one point not coterminous with absolute truth and actually defined in part by its own contingency.

Christian thinkers outside fundamentalist circles have resisted accommodation of the modern idea of fact into their thought precisely because it overemphasizes verifiability as a pre-condition for truthfulness. As a Catholic example Bernard Lonergan’s writings show the tension; his work *Insight* seeks to examine not just knowledge of things, but knowledge of knowledge, insight into insight⁶ and so we would expect to find there a discussion of the concept. Lonergan characterizes method of his project, that of inquiry in to the nature of insight as something that “...is both concrete and practical, and the motives for undertaking its execution resides, not in the realm of easy generalities, but in the difficult domain of *matters of fact.*”⁷ (Emphasis mine). In a project that uses this vocabulary of the material it would be natural to assume that not only the method but also the domain would be well defined but later Lonergan himself

⁶ Bernard J.F Lonergan. *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*. (New York: Philosophical Library 1957) p.ix

⁷ *Ibid.* p. xvii

asks “But what is fact? What is the clear precise definitive, irrevocable, dominant something that we name fact? The question is too large to be settled here.”⁸ Reading this in a book that stretches to over 700 pages can be disheartening; if it is too large for this book to handle perhaps it is unanswerable. But only a few lines down the same page Lonergan tells us that fact is “concrete”, “intelligible” it “possesses conditional necessity”, and it is “the natural objective of human cognitional processes”. The supposed dichotomy between these two statements collapses in light of Lonergan’s overall project which holds “The foundations on which science relies are not a set of self-evident premises or of necessary and eternal truths. What the scientist relies on ultimately is his method.”⁹ So he does not dwell on the concept of fact and instead looks at how we can know a fact when we see one, or more specifically describes the conditions for the judgement of fact which is couched in a *method*.

Lonergan concerns himself with the apprehension of facts and not their entire nature. Nevertheless he understands the temptation to reduce his position to one of pure materialism and cautions that “If existence is a mere matter of fact, it is nothing...If it is a mere matter of fact that we know and that there are to be known classical and statistical laws...then both the knowing and the known are nothing.”¹⁰ The fact is ultimately a discrete descriptive tool which is separate from the explanatory function of Being in *Insight*. The refusal to limit the nature of a fact to a sort of eternal and self-evident datum demonstrates the orthodox position from which Christianity has resisted

⁸ *Ibid.* p.331

⁹ Bernard Lonergan “Variations in Fundamental Theology” *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* (vol. 16) 1998, p.11

¹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 652

philosophies of materialism. We can acquire knowledge of reality definitively, but never exhaustively because apprehension of the infinite cannot be abstracted from the finite. For philosophical systems not requiring and indeed hostile to such a metaphysical system of abstract beliefs the descriptive power of the fact itself becomes reified.

This reification of fact is a methodological assumption underpinning the writings of Daniel Dennett and arguably most strands of materialism. It is nearly hegemonic within Western scientific discourse but is not necessarily so¹¹. For Dennett a fact is an empirical value which has been demonstrated by sound scientific verification; importantly a fact is not necessarily true or false prior to this scientific verification. Since belief in a “fact” apprehended by our senses or transmitted through language occurs on a personal level, the risk exists that barring any external set of absolutes any and all facts about the world become permanently relativized. The German phenomenologist’s project was to take as a common starting point the universal understanding of introspection but although they all hoped to achieve internal universals not unlike those of Descartes, their results were quite divergent. The solution to the diversity of first person phenomenologies for Dennett is to allow every interaction between a person and the outside world to exist within a heterophenomenological world¹².

In Dennett’s eyes, this is a world not unlike that used by an anthropologist to achieve insight into another culture. If an indigenous tribesman were to state that a plant had divine healing properties we would not need to believe along with the

¹¹ Notable voices within the scientific community expressing contrary views include John Polkinghorne and the late Arthur Peacock

¹² Daniel Dennett *Consciousness Explained* (Boston: Little and Brown Co, 1991) p. 70

tribesman that the plant was divine but we could accurately describe his beliefs, in other words we could give a factual account *of his beliefs*. However if after scientific testing the plant was indeed determined to have curative properties then we could make an objective fact statement based upon scientific evidence. The heterophenomenological world lets us bracket our perceptions of the world (what someone says to us, what colour we see in a painting, the intentions we impute to someone holding a knife) and allows them to be analyzed¹³. Heterophenomenology is important because it gives value to the internal thoughts and mental workings of other individuals in a way which can still be objectively studied. It can then take that data and attempt to test it against previously verified information from other sources (other tribesman, historical accounts from around the world, etc.) and attempt to create universalize the personal world. Thus through verification we can *know* the meaning of the words, the colour of the painting or the intentions of the knife wielder. From this a verified account of heterophenomena can be used in the judicious creating of theories which explain on a super personal level the beliefs and actions of the individual¹⁴.

So Lonergan's concept of fact begins with the personal apprehension of a thing which results in an evaluation that asks "it is so?" while Dennett sees the reliance on personal apprehension as suspect. He does so by tracing a story through German phenomenology showing ostensibly how the project to discover truths abstracted from personal thoughts failed. So he creates the concept of Heterophenomenology to allow

¹³ *ibid* p.82

¹⁴ *ibid.* p.96

for an external verification of these truths which is supposed to leave some value for internal life of an individual. But Dennett is forced into this position by his materialism while Lonergan grounds facts in the knowledge of experience, and then grounds that experience in Being¹⁵

The word theory (Gr. *Θεωρία*) has a long history in the western philosophical tradition, appearing in the writings of Pythagoras and some of the pre-Socratics as a way of thinking about the natural world. It has special meaning in the writings of Aristotle that are instructive for us. In the *Metaphysics* he was the first to contrast theorizing with praxis/techne, both of which are mental activities.¹⁶ The objects of theoretical thought are things which are immutable constants (e.g. gravity, the laws of thermodynamics) and the purpose of this theorizing is actually the enjoyment derived from the pursuit itself; for this reason theorizing ought to be done as a leisure activity.¹⁷ *Praxis/techne* on the other hand is knowledge sought towards a particular end and is characterized by action rather than leisurely contemplation. If I ask myself “How do the electrical receptors in a person’s limbic system relate to hormonal output?” I am making an enquiry framed as pure knowledge. Praxis, because it is teleological and has as its goal the shaping of behaviour or of society, frames its questions differently. It focuses on using deductive reasoning more than the induction of theorizing. A question of praxis related to the first would be how can I *better control* hormonal output in a person’s

¹⁵ Bernard Lonergan *Understanding and Being: The Halifax Lectures on Insight* in “Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan vol. 5 (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1980) pp.144-145

¹⁶ Vasilis Politis. *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Aristotle and the Metaphysics* (London: Routledge, 2004) p.31

¹⁷ *Metaphysics* 1.i

body? Such a question has a stated goal, but also an end. It does not say “let’s see what happens” but “how can we change something else or ourselves?” Through Aquinas praxis becomes important for Christians as well since it describes the process of divinization a work in the lives of Christians. Paul tells early churches that they must become like Christ through imitation either of his example (Gal 4:12, 2Th 3:7) or the ultimate example, Christ (Eph. 5:1). Thus my intent is one of praxis; for although this thesis considers theories, it does so specifically with the goal of turning those theories towards practical ends.

I have outlined two separate ideas here, one being the taxonomy of ideas (fact/hypothesis/theory) and the other the nature of theory in order to highlight a problem in the modern crisis which is our understanding of the self, and particular the purportedly immaterial part of the self which is usually labeled as the soul or consciousness. Until very recently the facts (in the modern sense) available to humanity regarding the conscious experience have been very sparse and consisted of deductions from philosophy with a few brute examples of pre-modern science. Trepanning, a pseudo-medical procedure which involves drilling a small hole in the skull, has been evidenced in the archaeological record since the Neolithic period and lends credence to the idea that there was an intuitive connection between the brain and what we call “mental” states.¹⁸ It was only with the development of modern medicine that the study of the brains functions came into its own. To be more precise, in the last decade of the

¹⁸ Kevin Seybold. *Explorations in Neuroscience, Psychology and Religion*. (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing, 2007) p. 4

19th century a Spanish pathologist, Santiago Cajal, was the first to demonstrate that the brain was made up of cells. This more than anything marks the beginning of contemporary neuroscience.

For the student of religion it is important to know the background in order enter the debate using the same language as our interlocutors. The naturalistic method prevalent in modern scientific inquiry seeks to expunge any supernatural account of human consciousness and if (this is the big if of the neuroscientific endeavour¹⁹) the soul is related to the mind which springs from the brain then the supernaturalist is being painted into a corner by science. If our understanding of the mind goes out the window than seemingly the soul will as well. The fear which I have just outlined, that if the soul cannot be found or if the soul was tied up with a thing which can no longer be said to exist, is a by-product of thinking in dualist terms and as we shall see Paul does not think in dualist terms but aspectual. The fact that science assumes a naturalistic methodology in the quest to understand the mind is not an inherently negative thing, but when theorists extrapolate from scientific methodology a general framework of the world, then the theist must protest. In his book *Darwin's Pious Idea* Connor Cunningham defines the distinction as a choice between methodological and ontological materialism²⁰. Methodological materialism is the decision to bracket off accounts of the supernatural world for the purpose of more accurately describing physical phenomena. This move is at the heart of the scientific method and is in essence treats the field of

¹⁹ The big if in the sense of a Tillichian "Ultimate Concern" for the discipline. For further reading on naturalistic alternatives to soul talk see Owen Flanagan's *The Really Hard Problem*

²⁰ Connor Cunningham *Darwin's Pious Idea* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2010) p. 265

study as a control group that assumes no interference from supernatural causes. Ontological naturalism goes beyond this and claims “...not only that science must stick to what we take to be natural but also that the natural is all there is, indeed all there ever could be.”²¹ This is the operative principle in the Dennett’s thinking.

Prominent in both popular and academic settings our subject has been a vocal part of the consciousness debate for decades. Dr. Daniel Dennett is the Austin B. Fletcher Professor of Philosophy and the Co-Director of the Center for Cognitive Studies at Tufts University. He received his doctorate from Oxford University where he studied under Gilbert Ryle whose 1949 book *The Concept of Mind* was at the forefront of the 20th century assault on dualism and who coined the term “Ghost in the Machine” to deride the popular understanding of the mind²². Ryle’s student took up the same fight and has written extensively on non-dualistic accounts of the mind and several fields related to philosophy of mind including AI networking and cognitive modelling. Dennett is also cited as an evangelical atheist and frequently referenced as one of the “Four Horseman of the New Atheism” along with Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris and the late Christopher Hitchens²³. His writing is lucid even when dealing with very technical subjects, which has earned him a large following at a popular level. His attacks on Cartesian models of the self have led him to propose an alternative called the Multiple Drafts Model which seeks to expunge the idea that the mind contains a *Cartesian theatre*, the antiquated notion of a central location in front of which all sensory data is

²¹ *Ibid.* p.266

²² Gilbert Ryle. *The Concept of Mind* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1949) p.15

²³ The New Statesman #140 p.9 Dec 2011

paraded. The need for such an alternative model, Dennett argues, arises because our prevailing models presuppose a dualistic self that are not congruent with modern neuroscience. Prior to the 20th century almost all knowledge of the mind was deductive, including the information available to Descartes. Now that neuroscience permits the inductive examination of the brain it renders Cartesian dualism incoherent and we must avoid hiding deductive models of consciousness inside scientific language.

A Failure of Intuitive Explanations

Our experience of consciousness is full of things that seem to have no quantifiable properties, the blue-ness of the sky and the smell of fresh bread were until recently unassailable realities that lived in a mental world about which science had little to say. Dennett's eliminative materialism is unwilling to admit the quale as an entirely subjective mental event and as such is well placed within the enlightenment tradition.

The fact that science could say little about the inner workings of consciousness has been a contributing factor to a dualistic interpretation of reality which, though a common feature of Greek and Hellenistic thought re-emerges in the Western intellectual tradition during the period of the Scientific Revolution. It is no coincidence that Descartes writes the *Discourse on Method* under the influence of Bacon's *Novum Organum*. Bacon's works were written in an academic climate seeking to throw off the overly mystical tendencies of scholasticism and his methods sought to replace appeals to revelation with a method for producing verifiable truths. In essence, through the

programmatic removal of idols of the mind Bacon hoped to attain knowledge more certain than had been possible since before the fall²⁴. Mental activities were not amenable to the type reasoning proposed by the Baconian project and Descartes separation of mind and body allowed ones conscious self to remain a distinct, unique thing in the face of vulgar empiricism. The world of the self was filled with sky gazing and bread smelling, and the physical world was where bodies were born, grew old and died. Descartes begins the *Meditations* by asking us to start our search for knowledge by imagining that there is no natural world in an effort to sequester the quest for self-knowledge away from the project of Bacon²⁵. The result was an intuitive description of the mental life that stood independent of the body yet was still conjoined. In the mind a person does not think “we ought to do this” or “my arms ought to move thus” and then it happens. What we experience is some sort of unity of thought and agency that has led us to posit that the cause must be the same as the perceived effect. Descartes model was taken up as the preeminent theory of mind for the West and would remain so for centuries.

During the 20th century modern neuroscience began to change this reliance on a Cartesian deductive explanation of consciousness with the discovery of inductive insights.. The seat of our conscious experience had long been considered the brain²⁶ and Descartes himself thought the immaterial soul/body juncture was located in the brain’s

²⁴Stephen Gaukroger. *The Emergence of a Scientific Culture: Science and the Shaping of Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2006) p. 207

²⁵ *Ibid.* p. 214

²⁶ Though not universally, many societies have considered the heart to be the home of the soul, and Plato argued for the existence of a tripartite soul (vegetative, vital and immortal) that resided in the liver, heart and brain respectively. (Seybold, 2007 p. 4)

pineal gland. Instructive here is the fact that Descartes and all others who followed after him required a meeting point between the material and immaterial self to be located in the physical realm. Their methodology ran counter to earlier explanations that have come to us through Patristic teachings and the Old Testament concept of self as *nephesh* that saw the physical intermingled rather than hitched at a point with the divine. The need to find a connection between the mental and the physical has always been the greatest question at the heart of dualist metaphysics and as shown below, in Chapter 3 once physical connections are ruled out, metaphysical ones are posited.

Research into the workings of the brain hoped to explain the relation of the conscious experience to its biological underpinnings, but in doing so it also highlighted the non-uniform nature of the brain. There was no mystical connector at the pineal gland or elsewhere. The singular organ “brain” is composed of dozens of constituent parts, the prefrontal cortex, basal ganglia, medulla oblongata, etc. and although it demonstrates bilateral symmetry this by no means makes the centre of the brain the centre of thought. Through experimentation which was at first clumsy and dangerous neuroscientists determined that different sections of the brain were responsible for processing different stimuli and regulating different bodily functions. Thus the medulla controls autonomic physical activities, personality traits and the executive function have been linked to the prefrontal cortex, while the basal ganglia is crucial to controlling eye movement.

Even more surprising is the way in which the brain seems to be constructed in a way that demonstrates its own evolution. Autonomic nerve functions are controlled in the basal ganglia which colloquially is called the “reptilian brain”. Our olfactory sense is most likely our oldest sensory system and bypasses the thalamus as it provides the rest of the brain with data which is why smells can seem so primal and evocative²⁷. Given that the brain seems to be an artefact which plots evolutionary paths it could be assumed that a recent biological change could be linked to the recent evolutionary emergence of consciousness. But there has been no demonstration of a definitive source of the conscious experience in a particular part of the brain. There is no part of the brain which can be said to control self-reflection, no one point to which all information flows and no demonstrable way in which qualia can be distinguished by their physical correlates.

A working definition of this term should be given since it figures in the debate. Dennett defines qualia as “an unfamiliar term for something that could not be more familiar to each of us: the ways things seem to us.”²⁸ A more general definition is “what something is like”. In relation to the conscious experience the qualia of existence is argued to be intrinsic to the thing which exists, and unable to be experienced by others. Thomas Nagel popularized this idea in his paper "*What is it like to be a Bat?*" wherein he states “If we acknowledge that a physical theory of mind must account for the subjective character of experience, we must admit that no presently available

²⁷ Daniel Dennett *Kinds of Mind: Towards an Understanding of Consciousness* (New York: Basic Books 1999) P. 103

²⁸ Daniel Dennett [“Quining Qualia”](#). Ase.tufts.edu. 1985-11-21. Retrieved 2011-12-03

conception gives us a clue how this could be done”²⁹ The inherently subjective nature of qualia has made it fuel for poets and artists; qualia is the intoxication of lovers whose overwhelming feelings cannot be expressed; the feeling of being in love is not like the definition of love. The inability to understand the qualia of experience, especially the qualia of consciousness, is a by-product of privileging the first person perspective in philosophy which Dennett counters with his heterophenomenology. As a materialist, Dennett believes that in order for qualia to be intelligible at all in philosophic discourse they must be mental events which are also factual. It is something that must be so and if the sensory feel of qualia is not infallible (have precise neural equivalents) then it must be nonsensical. To flesh out a refutation of the intelligibility of qualia Dennett uses a thought experiment he refers to as Orwellian/Stalinesque revisions which we will see below.³⁰

The greatest importance of the multiplicity of the brains functions for us is that the previously held theory of the unity of the mind as a decision making conscious entity has been falsified. Research on split-brain phenomena done by Roger Sperry and Michael Gazzaniga has shown that each brain hemisphere can demonstrate agency independent of the other. There appears to be no Cartesian theatre in which our minds review all of the sensory data it receives and from which commands are given to our body to act upon the world. But is this a problem? It is for the theist because it would seem to be a denial of one of the few remaining realms in which there is room for the

²⁹ Thomas Nagel “What is it Like to be a Bat” *The Philosophical Review*. Vol. 83 no.4 (October 1974) p.450

³⁰ *CE pp.115-138*

immaterial to have any influence on our material selves. The Multiple Drafts Model of Dennett is a thoroughly materialistic theory which accounts for mental phenomena that are not able to be explained by traditional dualist theories of consciousness. His theory is based upon new facts about the physical makeup of our minds, but if we refer to our taxonomy of ideas we can see that the MDM does not necessarily become a fact in itself by virtue of its explanatory powers. What it does is attempt to arrange facts in a logical sequence that allows for further information to be extracted, fulfilling the same function intellectually that an algorithm would mathematically. I will now briefly show a model of Cartesian dualism as traditionally understood and then explain the Multiple Drafts Model and how it was created in response to modern scientific discovery over and against Cartesian dualism. It will be this MDM that will help us read the Bible in a new way which remains theologically coherent. The non-monist model of consciousness can also supply a grammar that allows us to read more clearly Paul's non monist description of the person, making sense out of the possibly confusing mind/body/soul and flesh/spirit language. The similarities in the conscious experience and the classical Christian interpretations of the Divine framework of the Trinity can also be productive for speaking about the immaterial nature of the soul as it relates to the mind.

Dualism as traditionally understood

If while reading this you, the reader, consider yourself you are performing the most basic type of self-reflection. The mental loop of "I am thinking about thinking

about myself” seems to be unique to humans and the possibility for this action is at the heart of the conscious experience, and the primary reality which lead Descartes to formulate his dualist framework.

I next considered attentively what I was; and I saw that while I could pretend that I had no body, that there was no world, and no place for me to be in, I could not pretend that I was not; on the contrary, from the mere fact that I thought of doubting the truth of other things it evidently and certainly followed that I existed. On the other hand, if I had merely ceased to think, even if everything else that I had ever imagined had been true, I had no reason to believe that I should have existed. From this I recognized that I was a substance whose whole essence or nature is to think and whose being requires no place and depends on no material thing.³¹

The thinking place is where the experiencing of life happens and also where the appreciating of the qualia of life happens. Cartesian dualism required a locus for thought because while on the one hand it was obvious that humans were thinking creatures on the other the body clearly participated in the physical nature of the world. Descartes stands at the beginning of the modern period for a reason; he was the first important figure to assail the Aristotelian underpinnings of scholasticism which was a rejection of substantial forms as explanatory principles in physics. Within this framework, humans are composed of a primary substance that is not strictly matter, though just what constitutes the primary substance is an ongoing debate³² what is certain is that the substance was purposively arranged. A substantial form was thought to be an immaterial principle of material organization that resulted in a particular thing of a

³¹ DM 4.33 in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes* Vol. 1 (Trans. By John Cottingham et. al.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) p.127

³² Catherine Jack Deavel “Unity and Primary Substance for Aristotle” *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* Vol 77 (2003)

certain kind. The main principle of substantial forms was to provide an explanation for the final cause or purpose of being that kind of thing³³. The problem with the substantial form model for Descartes was that it was tautological. Look at the bird we call the chickadee. The substantial form of the chickadee unites with primary substance so as to organize it for the sake of being a chickadee type of bird. This also means that any faculties the chickadee has by virtue of being that kind of thing is ultimately explained by the goal or final cause of being a chickadee. This is why it is proper for a chickadee to fly, because in flying it becomes more like the substantial form. In this account, a chickadee flies for the sake of being a chickadee and not because it needs to transport itself. Although this might be true, it does not say anything new or useful about chickadees and can be seen as the logical outcome of thinking in terms of Θεωρία which we saw above. So it seemed to Descartes that Scholastic philosophy and science was incapable of discovering any new or useful knowledge.

The new inductive method of Bacon took as its first premises the observable fact, not the immaterial substance which produced the fact. Seizing on the explanatory powers of this method Descartes saw an opportunity to advance his own work. In the *Sixth Replies*, Descartes uses a substantialist explanation of gravity as it existed in objects like rocks to highlight the illogical nature of the Scholastics³⁴. As Aristotle would have it the end of being a stone was a tendency to move toward the center of the earth; this explanation implies that the stone has knowledge of this goal, where the centre of

³³ Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy "*Rene Descartes: The Mind-Body Distinction*" <http://www.iep.utm.edu/mindbodydesc.html>. May 3, 2006

³⁴ *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes* Vol. 1 pp.182-183

the earth is and how to get there. But surely a rock cannot know this since a rock is not a *res cogitans*. Following this example:

1. A person is a physical thing,
2. it is not proper to a physical thing to have immaterial qualities such as the ability to think
3. A person can think.
4. Therefore there must exist within a person an element which is capable of thought
5. A person is not only a physical thing, but both a physical and non-physical thing.

The theory is predicated on assumptions about the way the mind works which were arrived at deductively. As our taxonomy showed us, theories are built out of the facts that underpin them. The realm of facts about the mind available to Descartes was almost entirely deductive in origins whereas the methods of Bacons' scientific project were inductive and more importantly, hugely productive. The redefinition of the self in dualist terms by Descartes was a heroic effort to carve out a space in which to analyse the mind deductively in order to keep our understanding of the immaterial mental world moving apace with the newly invigorated inductive science of Bacon. However neuroscience is now finally able to provide us with inductively derived facts about the brain, and taken together it seems that we are being forced to reconsider the monist account of an immaterial thinker.

A problem with stimuli interpretation

Dennett breaks down monadic consciousness using several examples, but the most in depth one is the Phi experiment of Kolers and Grunau in 1976.³⁵ The test which was originally put to psychologists by philosophers involves a subject looking at two lights which flash in quick succession which were only a few inches apart and of different colours. When the speed of the flashing reached a certain point, they became indistinguishable as two separate lights and instead looked like one light that oscillated between the two points. The remarkable part of the findings was that at the halfway point between the two light points the colour of the perceived moving light changed. If the lights are red and green, then they were not consciously being experienced as red-green-red-green but as red-red turning into green-green-green turning into red-red...

If³⁶ this is how we were experiencing things in a Cartesian sense then Dennett contends the mind must function either in an *Orwellian* or *Stalinesque* way. *Orwellian* in the sense that the past can be rewritten in order to accommodate new data (as in George Orwell's *1984*) *Stalinesque* in the sense that the mind can doctor evidence and create false testimony (As in the show trials of Stalin's USSR). Regardless of how we are being fooled, we would not know how we are being fooled because it happens on such a small time scale as to be indistinguishable from actual reality. What is common to both possible ways in which the mind is being tricked is that there are things happening in the brain which happen unconsciously that impinge on the conscious perception of reality.

³⁵ CE p.114

³⁶ There are alternative attempts to explain the color phi phenomenon see Selmer Bringsjord, Explaining "Phi Without Dennett's Exotica: Good Ol' Computation Suffices" <http://homepages.rpi.edu/~brings/SELPAP/phi/phi.html> and S. Bringsjord, "Consciousness by the Lights of Logic and Commonsense," *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 20.1: 144-146

Only with the advent of precise diagnostic equipment can we see through this biological spin doctoring, or exploit it as this experiment did, in order to learn something new about the mind. The problem with this is that there is no definite point at which the unconscious doctoring of our senses makes the transition to a conscious state. The lack of a definite point creates an infinite regress as we try to find the exact moment we become conscious of something. The absurdity of the infinite regress is in part what causes Dennett to call for a new model.

Overview of the Multiple Drafts Model of Consciousness

As an alternative explanation for the Phi experiments interesting findings, Dennett suggests we see sensory data as interpreted by the brain as immediately available. Each of the brains constituent parts is processing data which it receives from the senses or from other parts of the brain. What happens to that data is not unlike the collaborative creation of something like a movie script. Different copies of information are floating around inside our heads and being processed simultaneously.

Visual stimuli evoke trains of events in the cortex that gradually yield discriminations of greater and greater specificity. At different times and different places, various “decisions” or “judgements” are made; more literally, parts of the brain are caused to go into states that discriminate different features, e.g. first mere onset of stimulus, then location, then shape...These localized discriminative states transmit effects to other places, contributing to further discriminations...Where does it all come together? The answer is: nowhere. Some of these distributed contentful states soon die out, leaving no further traces. Others do leave traces, on subsequent verbal reports of experience and memory...But there is no

one place in the brain through which all these causal trains must pass in order to deposit their content 'in consciousness.'³⁷

Dennett's preferred metaphor for this type of thinking is the *stream* of consciousness rather than a theatre. Different elements of the brain build upon the simplest of stimuli to formulate more complex representations in our auditory, spatial, and visual processors. The information is then spun together in a way that creates the possibility of self-awareness but never solidifying into a single account of all sensory data. Consciousness more precisely is a state of affairs rather than a thing which exists. Within that state of affairs no one discriminative state, no one mental content is the final judge of all information.

How does this theory explain for our apparent self-awareness? Dennett turns to a common thought experiment, zombies. The philosophers' zombie has no desire to eat brains, but is identical to a human being in every way it acts, moves, and speaks. What is different is that the zombie is not conscious of its actions. Even if asked to speak on their conscious experience, a zombie could use an unconscious state to call on a different subconscious sub-routine to provide stock answers that are learned through enculturation³⁸. Supposedly even the plausibility of a zombie's existence is a denial of pure physicalism, but if we accept the traditional zombie argument Dennett says we must also accept a similar mental creature, which Dennett calls a *zimboe*. The Zimboe is an evolved zombie that as a result of self-monitoring has internal but unconscious

³⁷ CE pp.134-135

³⁸ CE p.309

higher order informational states that are about its other lower order informational states.³⁹ As such the information we can posit about a zimboe from a heterophenomenological stance is the same as that of a zombie. The inversion of the supposed properties of the zombie makes the thought experiment nonsensical; that is it can no longer be said to tell us anything special about the possession of conscious mental states. The description of a zimboe is the same as that of a normal human being.

MDM is accused of being a description of the way subjects report events, and with this Dennett would agree but he would not see it as a criticism. His *a priori* beliefs that the brain and the mind are coterminous do not create a conflict in this statement; how the brain works *is* what the mind is. The work he has done in providing a grammar of mental activity that is informed by the facts of neurological function is helpful, and we will continue to look at specific terms and experiments which show the non-uniform nature of the brain. In the second section I will engage the challenges to the conflation of the brain and the mind which are myriad and come from both inductive (neuroscience) and deductive (Christian Analytic philosophy) fields of study. Section two will begin to separate the theory of MDM from Dennett's related, but unproductive, materialism.

³⁹ *Ibid.* pp.310-311

Chapter 2 – Cautionary Tale

In the first section I have shown that there has been a shift in the understanding of the nature of the human being in the last century that has in large part been informed by the discoveries of neuroscience. The assault on dualism led by Gilbert Ryle and others culminated in the modern denial by Ryle's disciple Daniel Dennett of the singular rational monad that is called either the self, or more commonly/by extension (and importantly for our inquiry) the soul. This discourse filters down from the academic to the practical world first through scientific popularisers and journalists until at a non-technical level it becomes embedded in our everyday language. The work of Dennett is not hegemonic, nor is it without its own critics both academic and popular. Of particular note is the lively debate encountered between Dennett and the authors of the first major collaborative work to examine the interrelation of philosophy and neuroscience. *Philosophical Foundations of Neuroscience* (PFN) was published in 2003 by Blackwell and its authors come from the two fields discussed; Maxwell Bennett is a prominent neuroscientist and Chair at the University of Sydney, Australia and Peter Hacker who is one of the foremost authorities on Wittgenstein and was a professor at St. John's College, Oxford until his retirement in 2006.

Their book caused a great controversy and was particularly critical of the philosophic influence of Daniel Dennett and John Searle on the neuroscientific debate, so much so that the critiques in the book led to a debate between Dennett and Hacker

as a keynote session of the American Philosophical Society in 2005 as a part of their *Authors and Critics* series which was chaired by Owen Flanagan, himself a prominent voice in the field. That debate produced another book entitled *Neuroscience & Philosophy: Brain, Mind and Language*. It is especially on these two texts that this section will rely. By looking at this debate as an external observer we can see how theology can benefit from learning a new vocabulary for the purpose of illustration and understanding, and also that the conflict embroiling neuroscience has parallels with the issues surrounding soul-talk.

In the *Companion* Bennett and Hacker argue against what they see as a gross conceptual error in the language of neuroscientists, that is, the problem which neuroscientists encounter is an *a priori* mistake that affects their ability to frame experiments⁴⁰. Put simply, conceptual questions which are the province of philosophy are a matter of sense/nonsense. Empirical questions on the other hand are matters of truth/falsehood and are the proper domain of science. B & H admit that it may seem strange that the entire discipline of neuroscience is predicated on false assumptions, especially given the advances made in the field. Nevertheless they draw comparisons to other conceptual problems with hypotheses that had been *au courant* in their day. Attempts to explain combustion by positing the mysterious substance phlogiston in the 17th century and the similar luminiferous ether of the 19th century were both theories held in flourishing periods of their respective disciplines⁴¹. These theories were based on

⁴⁰ Maxwell Bennett, Daniel Dennett, Peter Hacker, and John Searle. *Neuroscience & Philosophy: Brain, Mind & Language*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007) p.4

⁴¹ *Ibid* p.9

false premises and were incapable of advancing science (except through their refutation) because they were nonsense.

The conceptual error that Bennett and Hacker wish to address most strongly is the tendency to recreate the Cartesian materialism which we saw in chapter 1⁴² At first glance it would seem that their work should complement rather than conflict with Dennett's theories of mind since as we saw he proposed the MDM precisely to address lingering Cartesian materialism. Dennett admits their shared goal in his eventual rebuttals⁴³ but the similarities end there. The divide is not in between body and mind anymore in latent dualism; instead it is in between body and brain although much of the same terminology is used⁴⁴. Verbs like believe, think, decide, or map, while traditionally were actions only ascribed to a human being, are now capabilities ascribed to the brain. So it is the brain that makes decisions, the brain that decides on which actions to take, and the brain that makes classifications. This is the level to which the problem has entrenched itself through the work of neuroscientists of the late 20th century (3rd generation neuroscientists who were the first to throw off dualism) Now with diagnostic tools of greater precision the fallacy is not just to say that the brain can think, act or discriminate but that individual parts of the brain can do these things.

⁴² *Ibid.* p.131

⁴³ *P & N* pp.74-5

⁴⁴ It should be noted that this is the exact same criticism Dennett makes of philosophers of mind outside the neuroscientific debate. He sees no internal contradiction in speaking of the brain as the centre of the conscious experience, but he would deny that it is the seat of anything. His preferred analogy is one of a centre of gravity.

The conceptual problem is in the mind of Hacker and Bennett a manifestation of the mereological fallacy, that is ascribing a quality to a part that is really only appropriate to ascribe to the whole. They hold that “the mind is neither a substance distinct from the brain nor a substance identical with the brain”⁴⁵ (Bennett and Hacker, *Philosophical Foundations of Neuroscience* 2003). For those in the camp of Hacker and Bennett it is more proper to speak of the whole individual; it is not the body that has a brain, but a *human being* who has a body and in that body a brain. The brain and its activities *make it possible for us* – not it – to perceive and think, to feel emotions, and to form and pursue projects.”⁴⁶ This idea demonstrates the reliance on Wittgensteinian theories of identity which forms the basis of Hackers critique of Dennett. Indeed in Dennett’s rebuttal he points out that the linchpin of PFN is a statement of Wittgenstein.

It comes to this: Only of a human being and what resembles (behaves like) a living human being can one say: it has sensations; it sees, is blind; hears, is deaf; is conscious or unconscious.

(Philosophical Investigations,
Para. 281)

So the conceptual problem is mereological in the eyes of Hacker and Bennett who feel that neuroscience had been co-opting the language of psychology, which speaks about the mind of an individual, and applying it to the brain in a lazy manoeuvre which basically cribs from the hard work done by psychologists.

⁴⁵ M. R. Bennett and P. M. S. Hacker. *Philosophical Foundations of Neuroscience* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003) p.26

⁴⁶ *N & P* p. 134

Dennett's reaction to their accusation is to say that what they call a fallacy is already explained by his intentional stance⁴⁷. Although not strictly a part of his philosophy of mind, Dennett's stances are related to his theory of Heterophenomenology which we saw earlier. The intentional stance is the highest of three levels in an epistemological taxonomy and each of the levels (or stances) are useful for determining the properties of an object and how they will behave. To be clear they are not modes of being, but perspectives from which an external observer can examine things, be they lumps of coal or complex organisms. At the most basic level of thinking about an object is the physical stance which deals with the physics and chemistry of a thing. Understanding the molecular structure of water, its viscosity and density are examples of inquiries into water's nature from the physical stance. The second level of understanding is the design stance which is concerned with engineering and biology.

We take a design stance when we assume that water will flow down a vertical pipe, conforming to the shape of the pipe and obeying the law of gravity. But what if there is water in a pipe and instead of slowing down the water is actually travelling up? Considering the situation solely from a design point of view will not help us if the water is superheated and rising in the form of steam. Information about the water's physical state is only available through the physical stance. Note also that the stance is something taken by the observer, not a property inherent in the object. This is important for Dennett because without a reflexive "I" the best way to know something

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* p.87

is not in fact through introspection but attempts by an external observer positioned in various stances to determine the nature, design or intentions of a thing.

Seeing the simple leap from physical to design in action it is easier to understand the leap that Dennett sees at work in the mind when he moves from the design to the intentional stance.

Here is how it works: first you decide to treat the object whose behaviour is to be predicted as a rational agent; then you figure out what beliefs that agent ought to have, given its place in the world and its purpose. Then you figure out what desires it ought to have, on the same considerations, and finally you predict that this rational agent will act to further its goals in the light of its beliefs. A little practical reasoning from the chosen set of beliefs and desires will in most instances yield a decision about what the agent ought to do; that is what you predict the agent will do.⁴⁸

The brain is made up of trillions of molecules which have conglomerated to form billions of cells. Here the physical has made the leap to the design through the genomic blueprints found in DNA. The intentional stance at the top of the taxonomy is concerned with our ability to make predictions about the brains subsystems on an intentional level. First an example of the intentional stance: Suppose that you predict that a person, call her Sharon, will put down a book and go to the kitchen and make a sandwich. The intentional stance would make this prediction based on the facts that Sharon has just finished reading the book, it is lunch time and Sharon has not eaten since breakfast. The activities of Sharon are predicated upon her being a rational agent (The intentional stance could not account for Sharon running outside, tearing up clods of dirt and

⁴⁸ Daniel Dennett. *The Intentional Stance* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986) p.17

showering herself with them while humming tunes from *My Fair Lady* because this would be an irrational act) and rationality can only be determined by repeated observance of similar actions taken by agents in similar physical/cultural contexts.

Recall the quote from Wittgenstein mentioned above that underpins the whole argument of Hacker and Bennett. “Only of a human being and what resembles (behaves like) a human being can it be said...it is conscious.” (Emphasis mine) The crux of the conflict between Hacker/Bennett and Dennett/Searle crystallizes around this statement because the latter hold that the brain and more specifically subsections of the brain *do* behave like people.

While it is true that complete decision making is only done by a person, something very much like deciding, like mapping is done by a subsystem of the brain. When we see the same neuronal pattern fire in correlation with a given conscious experience, we move from the physical stance to the design stance, and approach the intentional, which is fully realized in the person⁴⁹.

What this passage makes clear is that both sides of the argument are not just concerned with what language to use for mental phenomena, but what a person is. For Dennett the self is unknowable because introspection is not infallible and the intentional stance is his answer in the quest to explain human nature. After the failed attempts of Descartes and the later phenomenologists to take first person introspection as the foundation of knowledge, real knowledge can only be assessed on the basis of rational external observation. We are our observable facts and our predicted actions. For Hacker and Bennett, we are something beyond the observable, not in a Cartesian dualist sense, not even in a Cartesian materialist sense but in a way that does not admit sharing that

⁴⁹ N & P p. 88

sense with any one part of our constituent self. The attempt to describe this is the task of psychology, not neuroscience.

Theological Implications of the Debate

At this point there I must justify my choice of path for what is ultimately a theological work. What has been discussed so far has involved several disciplines, but not necessarily theology. Instead the debate surrounding neuroscience has so far been dealt with primarily by theology's cousin, philosophy of religion. Would it not be more appropriate to say that the dialogue between neuroscience and the Christian religion should happen with the context of the Philosophy of Religion? Let us consider this.

The famous definition of philosophy from Wilfred Sellars is

The aim of philosophy, abstractly formulated, is to understand how things in the broadest possible sense of the term hang together in the broadest possible sense of the term. Under 'things in the broadest possible sense' I include such radically different items as not only 'cabbages and kings', but numbers and duties, possibilities and finger snaps, aesthetic experience and death. To achieve success in Philosophy would be, to use a contemporary turn of phrase, to 'know one's way around' with respect to all these things, not in that unreflective way in which the centipede of the story knew its way around before it faced the question, 'how do I walk?', but in that reflective way which means that no intellectual holds are barred." (*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*)

If we expand the list of topics covered by philosophy to cabbages and kings *and God* then we can identify the particular section of things that philosophy of religion addresses. I will limit my definition to the way it is conceived in the West where the

primary questions asked are “What is God?” and “Can we reasonably say that God exists?”

Theology as a discipline is an introspective and reactionary tool of the church which enables it to engage the world and itself from an *a posteriori* position.⁵⁰ I do not mean reactionary in a negative way but with the sense that it must be preceded by something. To use the Anselmian definition, before there is the faith which seeks understanding theology cannot exist since it would really be some other thing seeking, some other –ology. Given the initial experience of faith in the divine it seeks to relate the revelation of God to the world and the faith community. After this initial move the study of theology works as a feedback loop which is always admitting new data whereby lived experience (tradition) informs the actualizing present and each new present becomes a part of an ever growing tradition. The continual living out of the reality of God’s revelation in different times and for different peoples is what provides the data that theology then reinterprets and feeds back into the Church. The philosophy of religion is a different, though related thing. Its primary aim is not to speak to the religious community but to discover through logic and argumentation the fundamental meaning and intelligibility of the Divine. All of this is done in a framework of logic and

⁵⁰ “Theology is science seeking the knowledge of the Word of God spoken in God’s work - science learning in the school of the Holy Scripture, which witnesses to the Word of God; science labouring in the quest for truth, which is inescapably required of the community that is called by the Word of God. In this way alone does theology fulfil its definition as the human logic of the divine Logos.” Karl Barth, *Evangelical Theology - An Introduction*, (Eerdmans, 1963), pp.49-50. Note the science can only emerge after the call of the Word of God and the creation of the community

non-contradiction. If the axiomatic in philosophy is reason, then the axiomatic in Theology is reflection.

Analogically speaking⁵¹, if existence were a car, philosophy would seek to understand the mechanical makeup of the car, the nature and interrelation of all the parts and complex systems in the car. The philosophy of religion then would be inquiries into the maker of the car and the ultimate ends of that car. Christian Theology as a reflexive discipline looks in the glove box. Finds a manual and from that (plus insight gleaned from the philosophers) tries to determine how to best drive the car and what to do with it when it breaks down. This is it is now necessary for theologians to take up the task of examining neuroscience that was before only the concern of colleagues in philosophy or science departments. The manual contains diagrams and language which are not always familiar to the layman, yet need to be understood for the continued meaningful operation of the car. What was a broad scientific enquiry performed by scientists and conceptually influenced by philosophers is now affecting popular culture in the proliferation of neuroscientific language and ideas becoming a part of public discourse. It now affects ethics, rights issues, identity issues and the way people conceive of themselves.

In the same way that Hacker and Bennett see a conceptual problem leading to confusion in neuroscience with regards to the location of consciousness, so to in theology the conceptual problem of *where* the soul is makes talking about *what* the soul

⁵¹ As Graham Ward notes, the very act of speaking analogically posits the existence of the transcendent and therefore substantiates the object of theology's study. Graham Ward *Cities of God* (London: Routledge 2000) p.ix

is difficult. If we say we have a soul, and yet there is no Cartesian theatre then what are we speaking of? Insofar as a word is a symbol that represents the object or action it describes so the word *soul* represents something. What is needed is greater clarity regarding just what it represents because the failure to be clear can lead to confusion.

When trying to picture a soul either in words or in images, the greatest sophistication most people can muster is a glowing ball of white light that emerges from a corpse after a person dies or as an ethereal doppelgänger of an individual. This type of image is especially common in out of body experiences which have been documented in the majority of world cultures⁵². Though the imagery is almost universal it has an animistic simplicity that is not well suited to theological reflection and does not provide any assistance in talking about the purported properties of the soul (immortality, immutability, incorporeality) Dennett's term for this tendency is "folk psychology" which is a relic of religion as a proto-scientific attempt to explain the world. Philosophy for Dennett remains in this intellectual ghetto when it refuses to implement the new vocabulary of science. Just because folk imagery of the soul is based upon debunked dualism does not mean that the soul itself is an incoherent concept. It means that the language used to describe a soul must admit new ideas and grammars in its explication. Let us quickly look at a few popular answers to what the soul is

- Your soul is what makes you you.
 - This is a tautology which tells us nothing about what the soul is

⁵² Allan Kellehear *Experiences Near Death: Beyond Medicine and Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1996) p.33

- It's the part of you that goes to heaven when you die
 - Here is an example of one of the activities ascribed to the soul, but it does not say what *the part* really is.
- It's a spark of the Divine in you
 - This is question begging in assuming that there is a divine other, and also that somehow that the divine is divisible. It also does not address the issue of personality, since a spark would be homogeneous in substance to its origins and would seem to deny basic individuation. (potentially satisfying soul claims for non-monotheistic religions)
- It is an animating life-force
 - This may be closer to the truth but remains vague to the point of being unhelpful.

While these descriptions are non-technical they reflect a mixture of scholarly opinions as well. The soul is referred to as the subject of human consciousness and does not die with the body by the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*) and while not false, demonstrates the intermingling of the terms mind and soul in Christian interpretations of the consciousness debate. Karl Barth rejects⁵³ and affirms⁵⁴ dualism in his writings while Paul Tillich denies the immortality of the soul. Others such as Bultman and Bonhoeffer affirm a composite understanding, for Bonhoeffer "A human being does not

⁵³ CD III/2 p.393

⁵⁴ CD III/2 p.394

have a body or have a soul; instead a human is body and soul.”⁵⁵ Is a soul what makes you you? Is it possible for a person to be alive without a soul? Does a soul permeate a body so thoroughly that people who receive organ transplants receive a piece of another person’s soul? It can be said of animals too that they are alive or dead, and plants for that matter. Must the soul of a human be further qualified or will I see my dead cat in heaven? These questions, while sometimes couched in a technical language and at other times decidedly vernacular are of huge importance to the conception of the self and they are also exactly the sort of questions asked by laypeople in the church and in the wider world.

The debate we have encountered between two factions of neuroscientists is riddled with problems of language as well as ontology. Saying what consciousness *does* and then making the leap to what consciousness *is* is precisely the same mistake made by theologians and laypeople who consider what the soul does or how it works and then says that is what the soul is. The merelogical fallacy can appear in soul talk especially in regards to eschatology. Common descriptions of salvation, especially amongst evangelicals are wholly focused on the soul. It is the soul that will go to hell, it is the soul that is blessed, and it is the soul that will go to heaven. Yet the soul is only ever identified as a part of the whole person as in Jesus’ command to “Love the lord you God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind and all your strength” (Mark 12:20) This is itself a retelling of the Jewish commandment of Deuteronomy 6:5 and as

⁵⁵ Dietrech Bonhoeffer *Creation and Fall* (trans. John de Gruchy) (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997) p.77

we will see the Jewish model of the self found in the OT as well as the writings of Paul are necessary correctives against dualism.

Consciousness supervenes on the brain and supervenience means that the mind cannot vary independently of the body⁵⁶. While there may be a quest for the neuronal correlates of consciousness (NCC's) the mere existence of such neurons will never explain the experience of consciousness⁵⁷. By analogy it also becomes apparent that the modern understanding of the soul is as something that supervenes on a living body⁵⁸. While there may be a correlation to be discovered between consciousness and the soul that possibility is too large for this thesis to consider. We could take the position on the soul similar to Dennett and Searle's position on the mind; that it is actually the sum of its properties because the idea of an independent ontology is nonsensical. Or we could argue along with Hacker and Searle that the mind is a thing which cannot at all be examined from a biological viewpoint, but the criticisms of this point of view are damning.

In taking either option uncritically we separate ourselves from historic Christianity. The tension of where/what the mind is and consequently where/what the soul does not necessarily need to be resolved today and is in fact present within scripture itself. The Multiple Draft Model is effective for reading this tension fruitfully because in addition to providing an explanation of empirical it can help us coherently

⁵⁶ William Hasker *The Emergent Self* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press 1999) p.59

⁵⁷ Owen Flanagan, *The Really Hard Problem: Meaning in a Material World* (Cambridge: MIT Press 2007) pp.26-27

⁵⁸ I am aware that this is itself a description of something the soul does, not what the soul is, but it is helpful for understanding the manner of the soul's existence

talk about sanctification. The refusal to locate or separate the soul of a person through polysemous language and an aspectual treatment of the self is a crucial part of Paul's anthropology. In the following chapter I will propose the possibility of incorporating a Dennettian understanding of the mind that is not monistic but instead composite and not a separate thing but aspectual. I will do so still informed by the consciousness debates of neuroscience while engaging the writings of Christian thinkers both ancient and modern. What I intend to show is how the scriptures can be fruitfully read through a Dennettian lens and look towards a future grammar of the soul as encapsulated ontology which is non-monistic wherein the soul itself serves at the brackets that all that a person is and can be.

Chapter 3 – Christian Accounts of the Mind

As we have seen, the materialist account of the mind found in Daniel Dennett's Multiple Draft Model has explanatory powers beyond those of traditional dualist accounts. The lack of any sort of central processing centre in the brain appears to give lie to the idea that there is a tethering point between the mind-as-separate-entity and the brain. Furthermore this absence makes it extremely difficult to accept any form of Cartesian materialism which would hold that the brain has a central theatre before which all sensory data is paraded. On top of this, Dennett's intentional stance shows

how, over and against the claims of Hacker and Bennett⁵⁹, the brain *can* be ascribed properties such that it can decide, prioritize and learn because from an external point of view the actions of neural systems exhibit a type of predictability similar to that of rational agents. To this point my examination has been looking at the way in which Dennett's MDM overcomes the challenge of another contemporary theory of mind found in philosophy and I have done this to demonstrate the validity of using Dennett as a dialog partner. There has been a third way proposed by several Christian philosophers of mind and it deserves brief consideration before continuing.

The consciousness debate, while present in continental philosophy and to a lesser extent within traditional theological avenues is truly at home in the analytic school of philosophy. As such Christian interpretations therein are rarely framed as an explicitly *Christian* account; their proponents self-describe as dualists or theists (though in fact they are usually also Christians). As outlined by an insider there exist three modalities for understanding consciousness

Some of us are *physicalists*, holding that all things that exist are physical entities, composed out of, and thus immediately explainable in terms of, the laws, particles and energies of microphysics. Others are *dualists* because they believe that at least humans, and perhaps other organisms as well, consist both of these physical components and of a soul, self, or spirit that is essentially non-physical. *Emergence*, I shall argue, represents a third option in the debate and one that is preferable to both of its two main competitors.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ I shall proceed with the understanding that Dennett's theory retains explanatory power in the face of H&B's criticism, but not going so far as to say that their claims have been proven false.

⁶⁰ Phillip Clayton. *Mind & Emergence: From Quantum to Consciousness*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2004) p.vi

This is also the one of the clearest examples of the way the terms soul and mind interchangeable and should put to rest any concerns that neuroscientific research on the mind has no impact on our concept of the soul.

Emergence is not just a term found in the consciousness debate, it can be found throughout the natural sciences. Any object is said to have an emergent property when the whole has properties which are not reducible to the properties of its parts. For those who hold an emergent theory of mind such as Christian philosophers Phillip Clayton and William Hasker matter is explainable by the laws, particles and energies of microphysics but when that matter is arranged in a sufficiently complex way then new properties emerge, such as the human mind. I believe that Clayton's methodology plays to the strengths of his opponents. As an illustration consider how this metaphor from a current cultural context demonstrates the futility of playing to the strengths of an opponent.

In the 2006 film *X-Men: Last Stand* fellow Haligonian Ellen Page plays the role of a mutant named Shadowcat with the ability to ethereally pass through solid matter while still maintaining a visible form that can speak/see/move (imagine the post-resurrection Jesus of the Docetists to appreciate the mechanics of this). Her character is tasked with distracting a villain named Juggernaut whose fictional superpowers give him unlimited inertia; once he starts running he literally cannot be stopped. The ethereal Shadowcat lures Juggernaut into chasing her and she uses her power to run through wall after wall, hoping these material barriers will slow the progress of a thoroughly material enemy. Yet Juggernaut smashes through all the barriers effortlessly because

that is who he is, he is made to smash through everything. Without changing tactics we assume the heroine would eventually run out of walls and be caught. It is only when another mutant (continuing the name-as-plot-function trope) named Leech absorbs the power of Juggernaut that he is defeated.

The emergentist positions problem will remain a problem so long as it leaves the power of the material to the materialist. As Connor Cunningham said above there is a distinction between methodological and ontological materialism and for emergence theorists, the ontological definition of the material world seems to stand. Since as we saw a theory is always in danger of falsification through the discovery of new data, emergence theory of mind is never more than one new discovery away from irrelevance. While not to deny the existence of emergent properties within the natural sciences declaring the mind to be an emergent property *tout court* at a time of such rapidly expanding knowledge about the human brain seems unwise. Returning to the illustration we see the emergent theory of mind functions as the latest barrier thrown up by fleeing dualists in attempt to slow the advance of the materialist juggernaut. The historical re-enactment of the role of Shadowcat by those seeking to preserve the separate existence of mind limits their definition of victory to simply outrunning the foe; an intellectual rear-guard of various dualist models of the self which each in turn fall to materialist critiques. But whether or not emergence fails along with older theories what hope, if any, is there of finding a Leech to usurp the power of the material?

The material world in the emergentist framework is still one wholly governed by a naturalist ontology which it attempts to escape by passing through the physical boundary and emerging as an irreducible new thing; a mind which is not explicable by any laws which govern lower states and capable of downward causation. As such this is a mind still susceptible to eliminative materialism's universal acid which leaves nihilism in its wake; the emergentists claim rests on the absence of reductive models of the mind. By pinning its hopes to the ultimate ineffability of the brain, it leaves itself open to refutation by verification. Though it emerges from completely naturalistic causes the emergent mind has the hallmarks of a Cartesian soul; it has no extension in space, it is self-aware and it has a causal relation with the body. The error is similar to that of the intelligent design movement which as Cunningham says "declares that science, in the face of unanswered questions, must look to religious explanations"⁶¹. The more appropriate response should be to ask for more and better science regarding the mind and from theologians, more and better arguments for the re-enchantment of the material.

In surveying the literature available it is surprising how in the mind debate among theists the belief in dualistic or emergent theories of mind is engaged from a Christian perspective from a purely philosophical standpoint rather than a theological one⁶². 20th century Theologians who were contemporaries of Gilbert Ryle acknowledged

⁶¹ Cunningham. *Darwins Pious Idea* p.xx

⁶² See bibliographic entries for Phillip Clayton, Dean Zimmerman as well as Nancy Murphy *Bodies and Souls, or Spirited Bodies?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2006) Notable for a more traditional theological approach is Nils Henrik Gregerson *From Complexity to Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003)

his criticisms of dualism and were willing to frame the debate over Christian anthropology in terms that aligned with contemporary philosophy which, they understood even in the fifties to be congruent with a Hebrew concept of the human. The influence of German Idealism via Historical criticism on Pauline exegesis may have overemphasized the impact of Hellenism on his thought but even in the middle of the century this was being corrected. There is greater consensus in this regard amongst OT scholars as noted by J. Middleton in *The Liberating Image*⁶³. Amongst NT scholars the proponents of the New Perspective continue to strengthen this view of the Jewish nature of Paul's writings. I will now turn to the way in which this Jewish conception works in concert with the MDM experience.

The simplest theological argument against any sort of dualist or emergentist account of the mind is that the Bible does not talk in these terms; at least it does not talk about the mind as a separate category. Rather the Hebrew view of the person found in the OT is an aspectual and not a partitive description and Paul faithfully follows this pattern writing throughout his letters.⁶⁴⁶⁵ In other words when a person says "I have a soul" or "I have a mind" it is the same as saying "I have a nationality." or "I have a fever." These are aspectual statements in comparison to partitively saying "I have a hand." or "I have a nervous system."

⁶³ J. Richard Middleton. *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2005) p.39

⁶⁴ James Dunn. *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) pp.55-56

⁶⁵ D.E.H. Whiteley *The Theology of St. Paul* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1974) pp. 35-36

Similarly, imago Dei theology has been used in its substantialist form to argue for a form of dualism wherein the mind or soul is the locus of immaterial part of the self. As J. Richard Middleton notes “The vast majority of interpreters’ right up to recent times have understood the meaning of the image in terms of a metaphysical analogy or similarity between the human soul and the being of God”⁶⁶ But Middleton stresses this is not correct and does not reflect the bulk of scholarship on the Old Testament. He goes on to say “Most patristic, medieval, and modern interpreters typically asked not an exegetical, but a speculative question: In what way are humans like God and unlike animals?”⁶⁷ Asking this speculative question instead of an exegetical one is clearly evident in Cartesian thought since for Descartes, animals were just sophisticated automata⁶⁸. While strong forms of this view, normally attributed to Descartes but in fact promulgated by his followers including Malebranche⁶⁹, have contributed to a caricature of his thought on animals Descartes actually was willing to concede a type of soul to animals. But this soul was corporeal and not spiritual “...the souls of animals are nothing but their blood...”⁷⁰ and did not impute to animals the properties of rationality or self-awareness that are hallmarks of dualistic interpretations of the human soul.

The closest Greek word to our modern understanding of a material body is *soma* and the word was used frequently in Antiquity to describe the physical part of a

⁶⁶ J. Richard Middleton. *The Liberating Image* p.18

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* pp.18-19

⁶⁸ “...it seems reasonable since art copies nature, and men can make various automata which move without thought, that nature should produce its own automata much more splendid than the artificial ones. These natural automata are the animals.” Rene Descartes, Letter to More, 5 February 1649, in J. Cottingham, A. Kenny, D. Murdoch & R. Stoothoff, eds, *René Descartes. “From the Letters of 1646 and 1649”*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991)

⁶⁹ Peter Harrison, “Descartes on Animals” *The Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 42, No. 167 (Apr., 1992), p.219

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* p.223

person; in Homer the word is used specifically to refer to corpses.⁷¹ So if we were looking for a Paul who speaks of the person partitively in a way that supports dualism then his use of *soma* would prove instructive. While Paul does use the word it never refers to the dead, in fact in Rmn 12:1 Paul appeals to the church to 'to present your bodies (*somata*) as a living sacrifice' which seems to foreclose on the idea of the body as inert material, our bodies must be alive in order to qualify as sacrifices. The close following of the exhortation of Rmn 13:1 'Let every person (*psyche*) be subject to the governing authorities' demonstrates the ease with which Paul switches from body language to soul language and the consensus among translators that these words have the same connotation in Scripture. Reading these as partitive terms for persons leads to confusion since it would imply Paul has different advice for different parts of the person. It is nonsensical to think that Paul would want our bodies to do one thing; our souls do another unless of course Paul actually was a dualist. This would only become less intelligible when we encounter more parts of the self.

Turning to 1 Thessalonians the benediction of 5:23 says "Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole mind (*pneuma*) and soul (*psyche*) and body (*soma*) be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." This might seem to suggest that Paul might have had some sort of tripartite view, but if so should we reread scripture to see just what our spirit should be doing and compare this to the actions of our soul, our body, and perhaps even our fallen body (*sarx*)? Whiteley cuts through this and notes that although the language at first glance is partitive the

⁷¹ LSJ: *Soma*

thought is unitary. “If he had been a metaphysical or anthropological dualist, he would have prayed that when the sinful body perished the Spirit, and perhaps even the soul, would soar aloft to its natural abode.”⁷² Considered as aspectual language this preserves the unity of the person while stressing the extent to which every aspect must be turned towards sanctification. Although Paul does address his audience using all of these terms at different times, he does not condone the sanctification of one aspect at the expense of another. There is no one aspect of the person that carries more weight than any other just as for Dennett there is no one “canonical draft” which tells the ultimate story of conscious experience. To help illustrate this diagram 1, which is modelled on the traditional shield of the Trinity is a clear picture of how to think about Paul’s self and the relation of mind to that self.⁷³

The faithful re-presentation of a Jewish understanding of the unitary nature of man is something that is particularly important to Paul. Outside the Pauline corpus there are examples of *soma* used in more typically Greek ways:

⁷² Whiteley p.38

⁷³ One caution: The use of this diagram to explain the self as aspectual does not mean that I also believe that the three persons of the Godhead are merely aspects of the true God, this is obviously heretical. I use it as way of analogy not as direct correlation

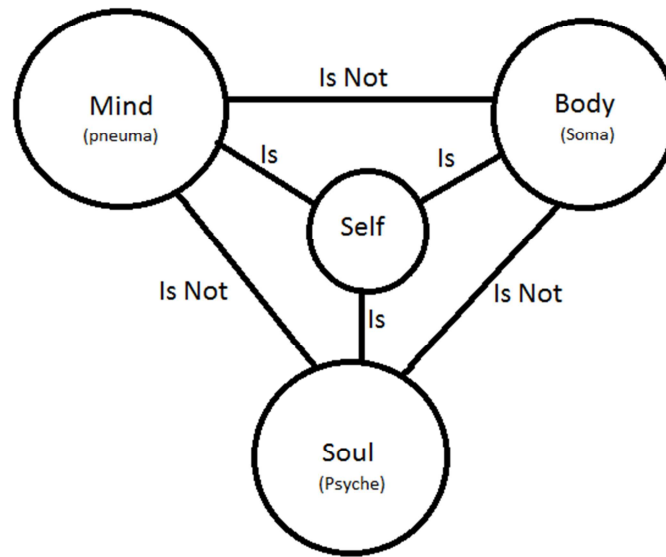


Diagram 1

Jude 1:9 speaks of the Archangel Michael and the dead body (*soma*) of Moses and in Hebrew 13 the word is used for the bodies of animals (*somata*) destined to be used in burnt offerings. Given the paucity of these examples though, and considered against the importance of the Pauline letters and the Jewish origins of Christianity, these examples are more likely to demonstrate the Hellenistic influence on thought in the Levant during the time of the writing of the New Testament than they are proof of a dualistic self. Furthermore at no point in the Old or New Testament is there any account of the self that favours the sanctification of one part of the self at the expense of others. So reading of Paul as holding a unitary view of man is faithful to the scholarly tradition, now within the unitary nature of the self (over and against a unitary nature of the mind) let us turn specifically to the Multiple Drafts Model to see how it functions exegetically.

Multiple Drafts: A model for tension and relation

The great benefit of accepting the Multiple Draft Model of consciousness is that it allows for a coherent description of tension and relation in the even after we have admitted that creation is ontologically monistic. In dualist or emergent frameworks, there is a grammar of division which force the Christian to interpret passages which speak of conflict and relationship as a bifurcation of the self and the sanctification of the self becomes an act of amputation rather than purification. Looking at the classic text of internal conflict we read:

For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. (Romans 7:15-23)

If we assumed that Paul was in fact a dualist we would expect that in examining the war between the law of his mind and the law of his members the natural response would be to mortify or amputate his members. The gnostic flavour of that suggestion is as obvious as it is heretical but nevertheless an easily drawn conclusion if we are not careful.

First the passage begins with an admission that even Paul's own self-awareness is not sufficient to explain what he does. One criticism levelled against the MDM is that it subverts the common sense approach to the mind; that is whatever I might *think* I am experiencing as consciousness is not in fact the case. This would imply that I should be able to intuitively arrive at an exhaustive understanding of my own actions but that is not so as demonstrated by the phi experiment discussed above and is attested by Paul himself. Paul is admitting that exhaustive knowledge of his inner workings is not available to him, and the theme of the inability to fully comprehend the self persists through to the theology of Radical Orthodoxy via Blondel⁷⁴. In MDM the brains subsystems are in essence spin-doctoring a disjointed mass of sensory information into an intelligible stream of consciousness and so when pressed it stands to reason that our intuitive understanding of our actions slips between our fingers like so much clutching at sand.

Though we may not understand our own actions exhaustively, it is certain from human experience, and clear from Paul's writing that there is some sort of conflict. Returning to the diagram and stretching the analogy one of the characteristics of the relationships within the Trinity is that they are in perfect harmony with one another. The human condition does not demonstrate such perfect harmony, nor is there an infinite depth of self-knowledge. As imperfect beings any relationship within us must therefore also be imperfect. It is there, in the self-reflective disunity of the self that the MDM arises. Multiple sensory systems within the brain, in concert with more complex

⁷⁴ Millbank, *Theology and Social Theory*. Pp.210-220

brain sections tasked with synthesizing the sensory data, are constantly vying to assert the primacy of their information. The particular impulses which are preventing Paul from doing that which he “wants” to do are not external forces which vex his own internal efforts, nor are they a part of his mind which needs to be cut out in some sort of literal application of the sermon on the Mount. The attempt of the right ordering of the mind an exercise in harmonizing, rather than a violent excision⁷⁵

The MDM also is a response to the need for a material explanation of consciousness. Christian theologians such as Nancey Pearcey have demonstrated that Christian Materialism is intelligible and Biblical references to creation can support this while not falling into an ontological naturalism such as that found in Dennett’s writing. If we are to spread the Gospel to all Creation (Mk 16:15) and if stones can cry out (Hab 2:11) then it would be foolish to think that the Bible teaches that Creation is not in some way both material and special. The problem faced by Dennett, and especially engaged by Owen Flanagan is how to find meaning in a world composed only of matter, to say nothing of how to deal with Wallace’s paradox. The answer is not to posit an immaterial world in which God exists and therefore serves as a conduit for real meaning.

The true answer is almost so simple it gets overlooked. Matter *matters*. Insofar that all of existence is God’s creation then it is all a part of the salvific plan for the universe and if we are to properly interact with we must do so understanding our own complete materiality, holding this idea forever next to the knowledge that it was into such matter that God emptied Godself in the form of Jesus. It is also through the use of

⁷⁵ Following Milbank in *Theology and Social Theory* pp.373-381

material agents (us) that God will bring about the Kingdom. In the language of Radical Orthodoxy this is the suspension of the material; Creation is held over the void and threatened with dissolution and yet is upheld by virtue its participation in the Divine order.

Paul can and should be read as understanding this internal dissonance, though in a pre-theoretic way. While relying on intuitive understandings of the mind there is a tendency to fall into dualist language, owing to the diverse terms that Paul uses to describe his internal states. The work of Dennett to describe how the brain works in the absence of an immaterial mind allows us to read Paul's struggles in a way that is completely congruent with a monist view of human anthropology and indeed all of Creation. Furthermore the robustness of Dennett's Multiple Draft model in the face of criticism from the mind-as-separate-category camp of Hacker and Bennett demonstrates the dangers of ignoring this debate in favour of the current theological status quo; if Christian philosophers of mind hitch their arguments to ideas are rebutted outside the theological realm then eventually their ideas will face the same critiques.

Dennett and Paul are both monists, that is, their writings both demonstrate a belief that a human being is made up of one substance and they advocate against any competing claims of a dualist or even tripartite self. For Dennett the mind is not a separate category of thing because it is composed of the biological systems that form the brain. For Paul neither the mind nor the soul is a separate category because they are the properties of the systems, both natural and supernatural

that forms a human being. Dennett's ascription of mental attributes to the brain and even parts of the brain is justified by his intentional stance, which allows us to determine from a 3rd person examination how an object or system ought to behave. Paul's anthropology is obviously broader in what it accepts as valid data, that is not only verifiable fact but he also does not talk about the self as a dualist or tripartite nature. The ease with which he uses terms interchangeably and his desire to see all "parts" of the self is better read as a description of different "aspects" of the person. The composite nature of these aspects and their disharmony explains the possibility of a "war in the members" better than competing dualist models and also provides a better model of sanctification through the harmonizing of our internal aspects.

At the outset of this thesis it was noted that Christians are commanded to resist the spirit of the world, but that we must be aware of just what form the world-spirit is taking. It is also evident from my writing that I find analogy and metaphor to be one of the most important tools used in dialog with the world and so I would suggest one more. Resisting the world is never accomplished by running away from the world; since like Jonah wherever we run the world is still there. It is done by being almost exactly like the world and yet inverted by embodying resistance like a magnet or ionized particles. It is that inversion of Dennett's MDM that I have performed here not just as an attempt to paternalistically redeem his ideas but because they are actually productive. Failure to engage him as a thinker would be an act of running away while success in the engagement broadens the extent of Christian engagement with the world. Going forward there is a rich vein of tradition that embraces the multivalent aspectual nature

of the individual and especially the aspect of the person which we label the soul which deserves new consideration. The understanding of the self through Dennettian eyes will allow for a better reading not just of Paul's anthropology but all other parts of the tradition which have been subsumed into the feedback loop of theology. Now that this idea is also within the loop my hope is that it works like a little leaven in a whole loaf.

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