IS THE DOCTRINE THAT GOD IS SPIRIT AN INCOHERENT CONCEPT?

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According to the Scriptures[1] and to traditional Christian theology, God is conceived of as thinking and acting spirit, completely lacking any material components whatever. In essence this means that God is a nonembodied mind. Anthony Kenny apparently feels that this is a very problematic concept.

> I know of no successful treatment of the philosophical problems involved in conceiving of a nonembodied mind active throughout the universe. It is indeed rare among theistic philosophers even to attempt to solve the problem.[2]

It is of course not the fact that God is a nonembodied mind that is so problematic in his eyes. It is the concept in general of a nonembodied mind, particularly one that can act on the material universe.

One thing is certain: Very few people have so far replied to this criticism of theism. Complicating matters, Kenny's criticism is quite brief—and it is not all that clear as to why he thinks the idea is so problematic. Therefore in order to give a response this article will draw upon materials written for different but related areas, primarily the areas of the possibility of disembodied human minds and theories about the nature of human minds. From these works I will try to suggest the companion problems for theism and then critique them.

I. Conceptual Considerations

It is granted that there are a number of difficulties involved in conceiving of a nonembodied mind. It is also difficult if not impossible, however, to picture a thousand-sided figure. Yet most would not say that the latter presents philosophical difficulties for such a figure existing. I mention this as an example to point out that there is a certain ambiguity involved in saying that conceiving of a particular entity is problematic. Problematic in what ways? What problems in conception mean that a particular entity cannot exist, and which are simply due to our limits in mental capacity?

The following is a list of possible reasons for saying that a nonembodied mind is conceptually problematic. For each one I will evaluate its applicability and validity as an objection.

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[1]Cf. John 4:24.

[2]A. Kenny, *The God of the Philosophers* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979) 125.

1. *A nonembodied mind is conceptually problematic because the concept is internally contradictory.* If the concept is internally contradictory, it would indeed be as meaningless as the notion of a square circle. This is most certainly not the case, however. Even the materialist D. M. Armstrong says, "I believe that we should say, therefore, that it is a criticism of any theory of mind if it is unable to allow the logical possibility of disembodied existence."[3] Michael Tye wrote an article in response as to why he did not think that a theory should have to allow the possibility of disembodied existence. He did so, however, on the grounds that the lack of an internal contradiction is not sufficient grounds to say something is possible.[4] I will address this article further in the second section. Still, I will point out that he did not claim that one can know in advance that joining the subject "mind" and the predicate "nonembodied" results in a formal contradiction.

2. *A nonembodied mind is conceptually problematic because it cannot be mentally pictured.* Many in the empiricist tradition would hold with Hume that all genuine knowledge about existing entities comes to us through sense experiences. Still, this does not rule out the logical possibility that there are other types of entities that humans simply lack the capacity to perceive and/or mentally picture. It appears that the only way this conceptual difficulty would count against theism is if one also holds to a stronger position that claims that statements describing nonembodied entities that cannot be mentally pictured are actually meaningless. Wittgenstein seems to come close to saying this at one point:

> If you say: "I can imagine myself being a disembodied spirit. Wittgenstein, can you imagine yourself as a disembodied spirit?"—I'd say: "I'm sorry. I [so far] connect nothing with these words."[5]

He did not just say that he could not imagine that state of affairs; he said he attached no meaning to the words. To say, however, that a description of an entity that cannot be visually imagined is meaningless is to land in a number of difficulties with even mundane entities. For example, air cannot be pictured. If one says that one can picture seeing trees swaying, hearing the wind howl, and feeling a gentle breeze, all of these are only effects from which we infer the existence of air and not air itself—and the same process can be used to infer a nonembodied God.

A serious objection, though, might be that air can be imagined in principle. One only has to picture dimensional molecules that are simply too small and too sparsely concentrated to be seen directly, while God is entirely unimaginable. One cannot picture anything about him. This is true. But again, at the subatomic level air cannot be adequately pictured either. Quantum jumps,

[3]D. M. Armstrong, *A Materialist Theory of Mind* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968) 19.

[4]M. Tye, "On the Possibility of Disembodied Existence," *Australian Journal of Philosophy* 61 (September 1983) 276.

[5]L. Wittgenstein, "Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics," *Psychology and Religious Belief* (ed. C. Barrett; Oxford: Blackwell, 1966) 65.

whereby a particle moves from one state to another without intermediate steps, is "incomprehensible."

One might further argue that such particles are only pragmatic constructions and may not actually exist as described. But if so these descriptions are at least not meaningless, for they are the basis for making useful predictions about reality. In fact one cannot make sense of physics with only particles that can be pictured. One needs to posit "unimaginable" entities and situations. Thus it appears that unpicturable is not equivalent to meaningless. And if a description is meaningful, I do not see how one can rule out *a priori* that there is an entity that corresponds to it, even though it cannot be mentally pictured.

3. *A nonembodied mind is conceptually problematic because there is no way to imagine how it can interact with other entities.* Brooke Noel Moore voices this objection when he says, "How then could disembodied and nonsentient spirits be aware of the external world? How also could they recognize other discarnate beings or distinguish one discarnate being from another, or communicate with them?"[6] Max Hocutt takes this difficulty even further: "But what is needed to prove the possibility of disembodied existence is having experiences without having bodies. We must be able to see though dispossessed of eyes."[7] In other words, all of our interactions with the world take place through our bodies—through our eyes, ears, hands, and so forth. How could a nonembodied mind interact with this physical world without having physical components as well?

I do not know if anyone could give an explanation of how such an interaction could take place. I do not feel, however, that this is a major problem. Commenting on Hocutt's article B. L. Blose, a materialist, says that it seems preposterous to claim that to understand an occurrence means one must understand the process by which it takes place.[8] For example, although gravity is an observable phenomenon no theory has been successfully formulated that totally explains why two bodies are attracted to one another. The general theory of relativity postulates that an object's mass warps space, causing a less resistant path for another object to move toward it. Yet no one claims to completely understand how this process occurs.

A similar problem is usually raised as an objection to holding to an interaction between human bodies and a human spiritual substance (or spirit). There is no way to understand how the two could interact. Yet this sort of problem is always present when it comes to formulating any understanding of the mind. If one denies the existence of spiritual substances or spirits, one is still left with explaining how mental occurrences such as thoughts and perceptions come about as a result of physical brain processes. Some may

[6]B. N. Moore, *The Philosophical Possibilities Beyond Death* (Springfield: C. C. Thomas, 1981) 56.

[7]M. Hocutt, "Armstrong and Strawson on 'Disembodied Existence'," *Phil Phenomenol Res* 35 (1974-1975) 53.

[8]B. L. Blose, "Materialism and Disembodied Minds," *Phil Phenomenol Res* 42 (September 1981) 64.

claim that this is the case, but the process by which this occurs is generally conceded to be unknown by its advocates. "How" questions that cannot be answered are not limited to perspectives that hold to an interaction between physical and spiritual substances. They are a part of any theory that tries to correlate mental occurrences with physical occurrences.

4. *A nonembodied mind is conceptually problematic because there are no conceivable means to determinately identify it.* This is probably the most currently-raised objection to the idea of disembodied existences. One form of this objection is raised by Kenny:

> Many a man can have the thought that 2 and 2 make 4.... What makes my thoughts my thoughts is such things as that they are expressed by my mouth and written by my hands. If there is a God who has thoughts, what makes the thoughts his thoughts? If God has no body then there is no divine bodily behavior to serve as the basis of attribution to him of thoughts and knowledge.[9]

This appears to be a rather strange objection at first glance. I doubt that most people would think that what makes a thought theirs is that it is expressed by their mouth or hands, for certainly there are many physically unexpressed thoughts that people have no trouble identifying as their own. Perhaps what he means is that all such thoughts are potentially able to be expressed through one's body. But even so, is that really what makes them belong to a person? What about a person completely paralyzed for the rest of his life? If he were also blind and deaf, he would have no potential to bodily express his thoughts. Yet I think it is undeniable that he still can have thoughts and know that they are his.

Peter Geach gives a slightly different angle to this difficulty of identifying a disembodied mind: the problem of differentiation of disembodied minds.

> What does constitute the difference between two disembodied human minds? If we could find no ground of differentiation, then not only would that which survived be a mere remnant of a person—there would not even be a surviving individual.[10]

Moore gives still another slightly different approach: the supposed impossibility of grounds for reidentification.

> The view that discourse about spirits is unintelligible rests on the premise that it cannot be determined whether a spirit which exists at one time is the same spirit as that which existed earlier. If this cannot be determined, if spirits cannot be reidentified, then spirit is not an intelligible term.[11]

Terance Penelhum gives somewhat similar criticisms. A body, he argues, is necessary for the identity of a person. He says that memory alone will not qualify as identifying a nonembodied mind. Memories can be false as in the case of a person hypnotized to "remember" certain things that never really

[9]Kenny, *God of Philosophers* 124.

[10]P. T. Geach, "Immortality," in *Immortality* (ed. T. Penelhum; Belmont: Wadsworth, 1973) 16.

[11]Moore, *Philosophical* 50.

happened to him. He states that there also needs to be a continuity of a body to justify identifying a being as the same as one that has been previously identified and to provide a basis for saying that the memories he has are truly his.[12]

Penelhum claims that this is not merely an epistemological problem—that is, it is not simply a matter of not knowing how to identify and reidentify a disembodied mind. Instead the idea is unintelligible, he claims.[13] I think, however, that it is an epistemological problem. One can hold to the ancient doctrine of existing spiritual substances that provides the basis of continuity of identity (Penelhum), basis of differentiation (Geach), and basis for making his thoughts his (Kenny). This leaves us with Moore's problem of reidentification, which perhaps can be answered in part by considerations of memory (among other things). But that would then indeed be an epistemological problem of simply not knowing how to identify such a being and not a problem that indicates it is impossible for such a being to exist. That is because the spiritual substance, and not just memory, would be the criterion for the identity of a nonembodied mind.

Penelhum takes this "venerable doctrine" of a spiritual substance to task. He says that since the concept of substance is not an empirical one "there is no publicly usable set of devices for determining the continued presence of a substance, so its presence cannot serve as a criterion for applying the expression 'the same person' in ordinary life."[14] Thus the concept is a metaphysical one. But he states that "no content seems available for the doctrine." Thus he concludes that the doctrine "amounts to no more than a pious assurance that all is well, deep down. It provides no reason for this assurance."[15]

A belief in spiritual substances is not very prevalent among most contemporary philosophers. But for now it should be noted that the idea of a spiritual substance is not a logically contradictory one, and Penelhum does not make it out to be. And if there are spiritual substances, the problem of identification and reidentification of a nonembodied mind becomes an epistemological difficulty and not an insurmountable problem. That is because it is a considerable logical jump to go from saying that we do not exactly know what a spiritual substance or a nonembodied mind is in itself to saying that thus there cannot be one.

The concept of a nonembodied mind is a problematic one. But these problems seem necessary to the concept. If we could mentally picture a nonembodied entity, it would not be nonembodied. That is because all of our mental pictures involve pictures of some form of bodies. Similarly if we could identify one by pointing to it or the like, it would not be nonembodied either. Most of these conceptual problems are the direct results of unpacking the

[12]T. Penelhum, "Personal Identity," in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (ed. P. Edwards; New York: Macmillan, 1967), 6. 95-107.

[13]T. Penelhum, *Survival and Disembodied Existence* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970) 57.

[14]Ibid., p. 76.

[15]Ibid., p. 77.

notion of a nonembodied existence, and if they were not there the concept would be self-contradictory.

I believe that the key issue so far is the somewhat hidden claim that if something is partially incomprehensible it is completely unintelligible. For all of the critics hold that there is some meaning to the phrase "nonembodied mind," but then they go on to show that different aspects of that concept are unimaginable. From this, many conclude that the whole concept must be incoherent. I do not think, however, that this follows. In saying that God is a mind, one is attributing to God some properties of human minds (such as self-awareness and willing). The nonembodied part is basically a negative concept. I think one can say truthfully that we can have only an extremely limited positive concept of what it would be to be like this. This notion of nonembodied, however, serves as a limiting concept to prevent some of the properties of human minds being attributed to God as well—properties such as being tied to one set of sensory organs.

Therefore the concept of God as a nonembodied mind is partially incomprehensible—that is, unimaginable. But I do not think that one can say it is completely so. In fact it seems quite coherent to say that the reason it is partially incomprehensible is due to the inherent limits of our mental capabilities and is thus unavoidable.

Still, in light of the concept of a nonembodied mind being so problematic, many philosophically inclined people will wonder why to hold to it at all. This complicates our understanding of the world, and many philosophers feel that the simplest possible pictures of reality should be preferred.[16] This position is frequently advocated by people who maintain an empiricist theory of knowledge.

This raises the issue, even though it is conceptually problematic, as to whether there are any positive reasons for admitting the existence of at least one nonembodied mind. The second section of this article takes up one aspect of this issue. Specifically it will attempt to show that the view that all reality is entirely physical is inadequate to account for the known phenomena concerning human minds. I will argue that admitting a spiritual substance (or spirit) as a part of man's constituency will yield the most coherent explanation of man's mind. That being the case, it would not be gratuitous to embrace a belief in a mind that is solely a spiritual substance—that is, completely nonembodied.

This of course is a huge topic on its own. Therefore this is intended only as a brief discourse to try to give some indications that the concept of a nonembodied mind is not only logically possible but is actually plausible as well. I intend merely to sketch out a few reasons and draw implications for a purely nonembodied mind.

II. Ontological Considerations

Michael Tye gives an argument against the possibility of disembodied existence that is not based on the difficulties in conceiving of it. He states that

[16]W. V. O. Quine, *Word and Object* (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1960) 19-21.

such a being is logically possible, but that does not prove it is actually possible. The gist of his argument is as follows: By using Saul Kripke's terminology, the name "Michael Tye" can be taken to be a rigid connotationless designator. What this means is that the proper name "Michael Tye" denotes the specific individual himself and not any particular conceptions about him that may or may not be true. Now if Michael Tye's mind is discovered to actually be physical processes it is not possible for it to be disembodied, for this would be asking it to be something that it is not—namely, nonphysical physical processes, which is an obvious contradiction.[17]

If this is the case for all human minds, disembodied human existence would be impossible. It would be a contradictory notion. But all this depends on the mind being actually physical in the first place.

Now it is important to note that his conclusions have no direct bearing on another mind, a divine one, which has always been nonembodied. For there is no contradiction in saying a mind that has always been nonembodied can be nonembodied. Still, if human minds are either identified with or strictly the results of bodily processes it seems that the case for a nonembodied mind is quite weakened. It would not be impossible, but it appears less plausible. For if what we know as minds are actually bodily processes, what evidence is there that a mind can exist in the absence of body?

I would like to briefly evaluate three main positions that hold that human minds are essentially bodily processes or are solely dependent on physical brains. I hope to show that they are quite problematic and cannot be held without grave difficulties. Therefore I will defend that it is reasonable to hold that there is a nonphysical substance (or spirit) involved in man's composition, which is the core of his mind. And if this is the case it is quite plausible to believe that embodiment is not absolutely essential to mind.

1. *Identity thesis.* The different forms of the identity thesis or physicalism hold that all mental events are actually physical processes. Mental terms such as "debating," "perceiving," and so forth have different connotations from physical terms such as "the C-fibers of the brain are firing." Though these terms have different connotations, in actuality they refer to the same events. In other words, mental terms have the same denotations as some physical terms. Mental terms and physical terms are two sets of vocabulary that describe the same things. We may not think of mental events as physical events, but in actuality they are identical to certain physical brain processes.[18]

If this is the case, disembodied human minds could not exist because all human minds are physical processes. The identity theories, however, have a grave difficulty when it comes to explaining human visual phenomena, particularly hallucinations. Physical objects have dimensions. They take up space. Any visual experience including a hallucination—for example, of a pink elephant—also has at least two dimensions. But if visual perceptions and hallucinations have spatial dimensions, where in the physical world do

[17]Tye, "Possibility" 277.

[18]J. Margolis, *Philosophy of Psychology* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1984) 27-30.

they exist? I do not think that one could ever look around physical reality and find someone else's hallucinations taking up space. This is obvious, but any other dimensional entity such as a rock or a movie image seems to have this property.

I have specified hallucinations particularly because there is no way one can say that one is simply experiencing the dimensions of a physical object, for there is nothing out there. The only place this dimensional entity exists is in one person's mind—but it does exist. Therefore one has a dimensional entity that cannot be fitted into the dimensions of the physical universe. Therefore if, as most people hold, the physical universe is dimensional, there are other dimensional entities that cannot be placed within the universe's physical dimensions and thus must lie outside of it.

One could avoid this conclusion by holding to a Kantian-like position that physical reality is not really dimensional in itself. The dimensions of our experiences of it are simply constructs of the human mind. Therefore one does not have to worry about fitting the dimensions of a perceptual experience or hallucination into the physical dimensions, since dimensions exist only for human minds. But if this is the case all of reality is really nonembodied, at least in the normal use of the term. I do not know how one could then object to the idea of God being nonembodied mind, because all of reality would then be composed of nonembodied substances.

But holding that the physical universe is indeed dimensional leads to the difficulty of having mental "objects"—that is, perceptions/hallucinations—that cannot also be physical, because as mental objects they have dimensions that cannot be fitted into the physical world. Therefore there are grave difficulties with this view of human minds. And this means that there are grave difficulties with holding a "simple" view of reality that claims that it is entirely only physical. The existence of visual phenomena, particularly hallucinations, forces one to either conclude that there are some other dimensions besides the physical ones or to abandon the dimensionality of the physical world, which would seem to mean that all entities are really nonembodied. Neither course seems acceptable for a physicalist.

The two remaining views are not physicalist views—that is, views that try to maintain that only physical objects exist. They perceive that as a hopeless task. But adherents do view mind as not being able to exist apart from the physical.

2. *Emergence.* Some people such as R. W. Sperry hold that somewhere along the evolutionary chain creatures developed brains from which consciousness emerged and started controlling the organism's behavior. This is not a physicalist view for it admits the existence of minds as irreducible to physical processes. Consciousnesses exist, but they are built of neural and other physiochemical events and are necessarily dependent upon them. A consciousness can exert controls upon its brain, but it cannot exist apart from it.[19]

[19]R. W. Sperry, "Bridging Science and Values: A Unifying View of Mind and Brain," in *Mind and Brain: The Many-Faceted Problems* (ed. J. Eccles; Washington: Paragon, 1982) 258-259.

Emergence does not allow minds to be spiritual substances. Minds are composed of physical processes. But on this view, minds can also control physical processes too. How can they do so?

Proponents frequently appeal to the notion of downward causation. They claim that the probabilities of certain events occurring at the subatomic level of a person's brain are affected by the complex arrangement and operations of the brain. Therefore there is a downward causation from the macro level to the subatomic constituent parts level. Sperry says that this occurs apart from consciousness as well. For example, he says that a molecule governs the molecular course of its own electrons.[20]

Emergence may sound attractive to some, but I believe it has grave difficulties. This may be seen by asking: Is there ever an event in the brain that is caused by anything else besides another physical brain event (or some other physical stimulus such as an electrical shock)? If we say no, then the mind really cannot affect the body. Why? We would then be having all physical bodily events being caused only by other physical events. The mind then could arise out of physical events, but there is no room for it to play a causal role.

On the other hand, to say that some physical events are caused by something other than physical events, although there are not any nonphysical substances out there to affect them, lands one in the awkward position of having some events being caused without there being anything there that does the causing. This, I believe, is an absurdity.

Adherents try to get around this dichotomy by saying that mind is simply a property of the whole of the brain's operations and that many composite objects have properties that none of its constituent parts have.[21] (For example, a computer as a whole can do what its parts cannot do in isolation.) But this does not solve the problem because this still does not really allow a causal role to the mind. Of course complex entities such as computers behave as they do by virtue of their structure, but still every internal event is caused by another physical event. If this is true of brains as well, it is misleading and wrong to speak of minds as really causing physical events.

One can resolve this difficulty, however, by either accepting the existence of nonphysical substances that can causally influence the brain or by concluding that the mind does not really affect the body in any way after all. The latter view is the position of epiphenomenalism.

3. *Epiphenomenalism.* This theory holds that the mental realm is real and distinct from the physical. But this realm is merely a by-product of some physical processes occurring in the brain. The classic analogy is that the mind is to the brain as the babbling sound is to the brook. The mind as such

[20]Ibid., p. 258.

[21]E. M. Dewan, "Consciousness as an Emergent Causal Agent in the Context of Control System Theory," in *Consciousness and the Brain: A Scientific and Philosophical Inquiry* (ed. G. C. Globus, G. Maxwell and I. Savodnik; New York/London: Plenum, 1976) 185.

has no causal role in the physical universe, and so theoretically all human behavior can be explained without any reference to the conscious mind.[22]

For an epiphenomenalist, for every thought that we have what is happening is that incredibly complex processes are occurring in the brain. These processes manifest themselves in our consciousness as (1) propositions and (2) feelings (mistaken) that our conscious self is the originator of these thoughts.

Taken consistently, this view leads to a very strange way of interpreting what is actually happening when we do such normal things as carry on a conversation or contemplate the future. This is because it seems conceptually possible for mankind to have been completely devoid of phenomenal consciousness and yet have everyone still acting exactly the same way as they do with their having consciousnesses.

A major problem with this view is that there is no reason to claim that the phenomenal experiences we have must accompany the particular physical processes that they do.[23] For example, if I accidentally put my hand on a hot stove my hand immediately moves away and I feel pain. There seems to be no reason, however, for why upon doing the same action I could not feel, say, intense pleasure instead. I would grimace, yell and clasp my hand, yet feel pleasure all along.

Many people feel that epiphenomenalism will preserve the thesis that all phenomena are, in the end, explicable in purely physical terms. However, there can be no postulated evolutionary advantage to a creature who, upon injuring himself, feels pain instead of pleasure, or hunger, or some other sensation or experience. That is because by definition a mental occurrence can never play a causal role in behavior. So there is no way for natural selection to favor any particular mental experience over another, and hence these occurrences cannot be explained in purely physical terms. Overall, epiphenomenalism's implications may sound incredible, but they are all logically demanded by the theory.

I hope to have shown that there are major problems with holding that human minds are either identical to or are solely derived from physical processes. Even though it is currently not a popular view among contemporary philosophers, if one allows for the legitimacy of the concept of a spiritual substance one can account for these problems. By saying that the physical realm is not the whole of reality we do not have to worry about having to fit dimensional mental perceptions into the physical realm. We do not have to posit that a self can influence a brain without there being a substance-in-itself that influences it. And we can assign a genuine causal role to a mentally aware self, a self that is genuinely affected by phenomenal experiences such as pains and ideas.

Problems with the concept of a spiritual substance were dealt with in the first section. So, particularly in light of the grave difficulties of opposing

[22]Margolis, *Philosophy* 16-17.

[23]R. Puccetti, "Physicalism and the Evolution of Consciousness," in *New Essays in the Philosophy of Mind: Canadian Journal of Philosophy Supplementary Volume No. 1, Part 2* (ed. J. King-Farlow and R. A. Ahiner; Guelph: Canadian Association for Publishing in Philosophy, 1975) 172-173.

views, I conclude that the view that man's mind is due to an interaction of physical and spiritual substances is not only conceptually possible but is also philosophically the most coherent explanation of the known phenomena.

In applying this conclusion to the possibility of there existing a totally nonembodied mind I need to point out, however, that there is a major difference between human minds and a God who is a totally nonembodied mind. Human minds, at least while embodied, are largely dependent upon physical processes. Three examples that support this claim for a human are: (1) Damage to Wernicke's area of the brain seriously affects one's language comprehension and use.[24] (2) Taking a physical drug can totally alter a person's perceptions. (3) The retrieval of memories can be associated with different portions of a person's brain.

What this means is that one cannot view the brain as simply a "clearing-house" for the mind where the brain merely channels mental commands to the body and transmits sensations to the mind. It appears that many cognitive functions are indeed located in the brain. This suggests a model whereby the brain functions almost as a computer that a nonphysical self (or spirit) can call upon. But if the physical hardware containing a particular function is damaged or altered, the nonphysical self will have access to a faulty system and overall disruption of the person will occur.

Therefore a nonembodied mind would be a quite different thing indeed. It would not be a glorified human's mind but something qualitatively different. Still, I have dwelt upon human minds as a way of showing reasons for holding that mind is not strictly a physical occurrence. This seems to make the concept of God as a nonembodied mind not only barely possible but actually plausible.

III. Conclusion

To summarize, the first section categorizes four different types of objections to the concept of a nonembodied mind. I concluded that the first objection does not apply but that the other three objections do involve difficulties of conception. These difficulties, however, do not mean that the concept of a nonembodied mind is meaningless. They at least partially arise because the concept of God as nonembodied is primarily a negative notion that limits what can accurately be said about God. It is suggested that these conceptual difficulties arise because we are involved in the process of trying to understand something that partially surpasses the limits of our mental capabilities.

The second section contains arguments that even if human minds were physical processes or were solely dependent upon physical brain events, this does not mean that there could not be another kind of mind, a divine mind, that is not like that. There are grave difficulties, however, with the positions that deny there is any sort of spiritual substance (or spirit) in man's constituency.

[24]D. G. Jones, *Our Fragile Brains: A Christian Perspective on Brain Research* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1980) 36, 52-55.

A pure physicalist interpretation of reality seems unworkable because it cannot account for the existence of visual perceptions and hallucinations that cannot be made to fit into the dimensions of the physical world. This eliminates the identity thesis. Emergence, which claims that mind is composed solely of physical processes and can in turn causally influence those physical processes, is also to be rejected. That is because it turns out that it is really not mind that affects physical processes on this view. It is the physical processes themselves, interconnected in the right way, that cause all human behavior. Epiphenomenalism seems untenable as well. This view concludes that mind really is but a by-product of neural processes and truly cannot affect the physical world. This understanding opposes our most basic experiences and has implications that are so incredible as to be unbelievable. By contrast, a view of man's mind that incorporates a spiritual substance (or spirit) in his constituency appears to have good explanatory power. This makes the claim that a mind can exist without a body less problematic.