7The Nature of Reality

[**Metaphysics**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-69) is the branch of philosophy that studies the nature and structure of reality. Questions metaphysicians ask and try to answer include the following: What exists? How do the different kinds of things that exist relate to one another? What aspects of reality are fundamental and derivative? These questions, and many more like them, have been asked as long as human beings have sought to provide a rational account of the world.

These questions are not trivial. Metaphysics matters. The beliefs we hold about the world shape our *experience* of the world and our *behavior* in the world. Even our eternal destinies are at stake, as C. S. Lewis (1898–1963) powerfully illustrates through a series of fictitious letters between a senior devil and a junior/apprentice devil named Wormwood. In the first of these imaginary letters, the senior devil instructs Wormwood as follows:

Jargon, not argument, is your best ally in keeping him [that is, the patient whom they are trying to keep from becoming a Christian] from the Church. Don’t waste time trying to make him think that materialism is true! Make him think it is strong, or stark or courageous—that it is the philosophy of the future. . . . The trouble about argument is that it moves the whole struggle onto the Enemy’s [God’s] own ground. He can argue too; whereas in really practical propaganda of the kind I am suggesting He has been shown for centuries to be greatly the inferior of Our Father Below. By the very act of arguing, you awake the patient’s reason; and once it is awake, who can foresee the result? Even if a particular train of thought can be twisted so as to end in our favour, you will find that you have been strengthening in your patient the fatal habit of attending to universal issues and withdrawing his attention from the stream of immediate sense experiences. Your business is to fix his attention on the stream. Teach him to call it “real life” and don’t let him ask what he means by “real.”[**[1]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-217)

The book, of course, was Lewis’s classic *The Screwtape Letters*. He painted for us, in a wonderfully delightful way, a picture of the battle taking place between the forces of good and the forces of evil over humans’ beliefs regarding the nature of reality.

This battle over the nature of reality has been going on for some time.[**[2]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-216) In the *Sophist*, Plato describes “something like a battle of gods and giants,” an interminable “dispute” over the nature of reality. In one camp, the giants “drag everything down to earth from the heavenly region of the invisible,” arguing that true reality is found only in the world of our sensible experience. In the other camp, the gods maintain that “true being is certain nonbodily [i.e., immaterial] forms.”[**[3]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-215) In our own day, the battle over the nature of reality continues to rage. For example, in a well-known series of lectures delivered in 1960 at the University of Pittsburgh, the philosopher Wilfrid Sellars distinguishes between the “manifest image” of the world—our ordinary perception of the world as rational, beautiful, and mysterious—and the “scientific image” of the world, a disenchanted world of mathematical formulas, particles in motion, and blind forces.[**[4]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-214) Sellars argues that the two perspectives of the world are incommensurate and that our manifest image—the world of “appearance”—is not the world in reality; in reality, the world is the complex physical system of the “scientific image.”

In this chapter we shall consider, in broad outline, three prominent views about ultimate reality, highlighting their merits and drawbacks, as we seek to answer our fundamental questions about the nature and structure of reality.[**[5]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-213) We begin with perhaps *the* dominant views of our day, the view of Plato’s giants and Sellars’s “scientific image.”

[**Materialism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-64)

According to [**materialism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-64), everything that exists is material. The material cosmos is “one gigantic spatio-temporal whole,” composed of (in ascending order) particles, molecules, medium-sized objects, planets, stars, and galaxies.[**[6]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-212) Materialism is a kind of [**monism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-73). There is just one kind of thing that exists: the material thing.

Closely associated with this theory of reality is a theory of knowledge called empiricism. Roughly, empiricism is the idea that all knowledge is of the sense-perceptible kind. It is currently more fashionable to speak of “the scientific” instead of “the sense perceptible,” and thus many in our culture who adopt a materialistic metaphysics also adopt a theory of knowledge called scientism.[**[7]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-211) According to a particularly strong version of scientism, all knowledge comes from the deliverances of science. If you want knowledge, you must turn to the scientist.

For the materialist, notice the tight connection between epistemology and metaphysics, as articulated by the philosopher Alex Rosenberg: “If we’re going to be scientistic, then we have to attain our view of reality from what physics tells us about it. Actually, we’ll have to do more than that: we’ll have to embrace physics as *the whole truth about reality*.”[**[8]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-210) Science today, as Rosenberg’s comment shows, is exalted as the paradigm of rationality. If you want to be reasonable (and who doesn’t?), then you must be scientistic, and if you are going to be scientistic, then you must embrace that all of reality is captured by physics. Rosenberg continues: “Why buy the reality that physics paints? Well, it’s simple, really. We trust science as the only way to acquire knowledge.”[**[9]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-209) This is a bold statement, especially since it is self-defeating![**[10]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-208) But let that pass. We want to notice one implication of scientism as a theory of knowledge and materialism as a theory of reality: [**naturalism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-75), the view that there is no *super* natural aspect to reality. As Rosenberg concludes, since physics tells us everything about reality, “that is why we are so confident about atheism.”[**[11]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-207) Thus if [**materialism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-64) is true, then so is [**naturalism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-75): there is no God, no immaterial soul, and no abstract reality (more on this below).

The materialistic view of reality has a lot going for it. As already noted, it is widely thought to be the view of reality backed by the scientific enterprise. Given the fact that science is often equated with reason, there are strong sociologicalfactors for thinking [**materialism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-64) to be true. No one, after all, wants to be labeled asantiscience. Moreover, philosophically, [**materialism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-64) is a simple theory, positing one kind of thing only, the material; since simplicity is a theoretical virtue (and hence truth indicative), we have a reason to think that [**materialism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-64) is rationally preferable to its competitors.

Materialism is not without problems, however. One theoretical virtue, such as ontological simplicity, must be weighed against other theoretical virtues, including explanatory power and scope. Many argue that materialism fails miserably in its ability to adequately explain many of the phenomena of the “manifest image”—in particular, facts about human persons and their mental lives.[**[12]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-206)

Two features of our mental lives that seem to be at odds with a materialist metaphysics are the [**first-person perspective**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-43) and intentionality. When I (Paul) say I am hungry, I am in pain, I am here, and the like, I am reporting something about which I cannot be mistaken. I have privileged access to these mental states. They are mine. I am a self-conscious agent who can refer to myself using [**indexicals**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-55) such as “I” and “here” and “now.” However, as Thomas Nagel has pointed out, there is no place for indexicals in science: a complete scientific description of the world, identifying all particles and forces and their locations in space and time (from a third-person perspective) would leave something out: me.[**[13]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-205) As Roger Scruton states, “Science cannot tell me who I am, let alone where, when or how.”[**[14]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-204)

[**Intentionality**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-57) is the “aboutness” or “ofness” of my mental life. I have a thought of my wife, a belief about London, a hope for the afterlife. This aboutness that characterizes our mental life is, again, very difficult to account for on a purely materialistic metaphysics. Materialists typically try to reduce intentionality to physical causal relations of input and output.[**[15]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-203) My thought of London is reduced to certain inputs (I see a picture of Big Ben), which in turn produce an output, a certain behavior, such as my claiming that London is a grand city. John Searle, however, has advanced the famous Chinese Room Argument, showing how attempts to explain intentionality in terms of physical causal inputs and outputs fails.[**[16]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-202) What is left out, according to Searle, is genuine understanding: physical inputs and outputs can *mimic* understanding, but they do not *possess* it, and thus they do not adequately account for the phenomenon of intentionality. Moreover, intentionality possesses qualities that physical states do not (e.g., intentionality can be about nonexistent entities; physical causal relations hold only between existent entities), and this provides reason to think that intentionality cannot be reduced to the purely material.[**[17]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-201)

A deeper problem for materialism concerns its intelligibility. As Lewis puts it, “Thus a strict materialism refutes itself for the reason given long ago by Professor Haldane: ‘If my mental processes are determined wholly by the motions of atoms in my brain, I have no reason to suppose that my beliefs are true, . . . and hence I have no reason for supposing my brain to be composed of atoms.’”[**[18]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-200)

Lewis is noticing a deep conflict between materialism and the reliability of our cognitive faculties. More recently, Alvin Plantinga has advanced a more rigorous argument highlighting the self-defeating nature of materialism.[**[19]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-199) The basic idea is this: The conjunction of materialism and evolution means that our cognitive faculties select beliefs for their survival value rather than truth. But then, if my beliefs are selected for their survival value and not truth, I have no good reason to think my beliefs are true. But then, if I have no good reason to think my beliefs are true, I have no good reason to think [**materialism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-64) is true. Therefore if [**materialism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-64) is true, I have no good reason to believe [**materialism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-64) is true. [**Materialism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-64) is self-defeating.

While much more could be said, we offer one final thought. If Christian theism is true, then [**materialism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-64) is a nonstarter. If God, an immaterial self-conscious substance, exists, then [**materialism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-64) is false. Moreover, if theism is true, advances in science are just discoveries of the world that God has created, not evidence for [**materialism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-64).

Dualism

[**Metaphysical dualism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-67) is the view that two kinds of things exist in the world. One prominent form of metaphysical dualism is called [**Platonism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-90), roughly the view that in addition to the material cosmos, there exists an abstract realm of nonmaterial objects. [**Platonism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-90), as the name implies, has its roots in the thought of Plato (427–347 BC), who argued that reality is constituted by a visible world, which is temporal, changing, and contingent, and by an invisible world of the Intelligible Forms, which is eternal, unchanging, and the source of all in the visible realm.

Another prominent form of metaphysical dualism, advocated in the seventeenth century by René Descartes (1596–1650), is called [**substance dualism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-111). According to [**substance dualism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-111), each human is composed of two basic kinds of substances, an immaterial soul and a material body. Descartes argued that the body operates according to mechanical laws of nature and is extended through and located in space. The soul, however, has no spatial location or extension; is that which thinks, feels, and wills; can survive the death of the body; and causally interacts with the body through the pineal gland (located in the brain).

Finally, Christian theism is another important kind of metaphysical dualism. As noted above, according to Christian theism there exists, in addition to the material cosmos, an immaterial divine substance. Since the viability of [**substance dualism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-111) and God’s existence are discussed in detail in chapters 11, 12, and 15, in the remainder of this section we shall focus on [**Platonism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-90) and the claim that, in addition to the spatiotemporal universe, there exists an abstract realm of reality populated by entities such as properties, relations, propositions, sets, numbers, states of affairs, possible worlds, and the like.

It will be helpful to first understand just what an abstract object is and how it differs from a concrete object. While the issue is debated, there is somewhat of a consensus among philosophers as to the following: An abstract object is a nonspatial, nontemporal, necessarily existing,[**[20]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-198) causally impotent entity. A concrete object—a table, chair, rock, electron, or star—is defined, in contrast, as that which is not abstract.[**[21]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-197)

Why think that abstract objects exist? Two important arguments for Platonism are the One over Many [**Argument**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-5), to be discussed in chapter 8, and the Indispensability [**Argument**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-5), which we shall explore here. The Indispensability [**Argument**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-5) can be formulated as follows:

1. If a simple sentence is literally true, then the objects its singular terms denote exist.
2. There are literally true simple sentences containing singular terms that refer to things that could be only abstract objects.
3. Therefore, abstract objects exist.[**[22]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-196)

Consider familiar sentences of the form “*a* is F” such as “The apple is red” or “Socrates is wise.” In these sentences, the subject terms—the apple and Socrates—are the singular terms, and if these singular terms are part of a true sentence, then it is reasonable to think that the objects referred to by way of these singular terms really exist. If it is true that “the apple is red,” then the object denoted by the singular term—the apple—really exists and is red. (In chap. 8 we’ll discuss the question of what to do ontologically with the predicate “is red.”) If it is true that Socrates is wise, then the object denoted by the singular term—Socrates—really exists and is wise. Premise 1 rests on a criterion of ontological commitment, in a tradition that broadly follows the work of Willard V. O. Quine, such that we are ontologically committed to singular terms and existential expressions (we focus here only on singular terms) of literally true simple sentences.[**[23]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-195)

Regarding premise 2, consider the sentences “Two is prime” and “Courage is a virtue.” Assuming both are true, the singular terms refer, according to the criterion of ontological commitment, to the objects denoted by the singular terms. But in this case, the objects denoted by the singular terms are not concrete objects: they are abstract objects—the number two and the property *courage*, or *being courageous*. Thus if the criterion of ontological commitment is true and there are true atomic sentences in which the singular term can be understood only as an abstract object, it follows that abstract objects exist (and [**Platonism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-90) is true).

Since the Indispensability Argument is valid, the nominalist, who denies the existence of abstract objects, must deny either premise 1 or premise 2. William Lane Craig, for example, rejects premise 1 and the criterion of ontological commitment that undergirds it. Craig finds it astonishing that so many philosophers take existential expressions (“There is/are”) and singular terms to be ontologically committing. When considering singular terms, Craig argues, “Far too many philosophers, I think, are still in the thrall of a sort of picture theory of language according to which successfully referring terms have corresponding objects in the world.”[**[24]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-194) To support this claim, Craig lists example sentences, such as “Wednesday falls between Tuesday and Thursday” or “He did it for my sake and the children’s,” arguing that it would be absurd to think that there really are *Wednesdays* or *sakes* in the real world. Craig thinks singular terms that refer to real-world objects are probably the exception rather than the norm.[**[25]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-193)

We are in deep waters here. Questions about how to establish whether something exists, what “ontological commitment” means, and the relationship between language and the world are perennial topics of philosophical dispute. By way of reply to Craig, it won’t do simply to assert the unbelievability of a thesis. The fact that Craig finds such recondite objects as *Wednesdays* or *sakes* as absurd is beside the point. What is needed are philosophical reasons for thinking that the criterion of ontological commitment is defective. One advantage of the Quinean approach to ontological commitment is that it offers a clean and straightforward way to determine what exists: “to be is to be the value of a bound variable” (for existential claims), or “the function of a singular term is to refer to existent objects.”[**[26]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-192) For certain kinds of Meinongians, who think existential expressions and singular terms are not ontologically committing in any sense, the question becomes, How, given your view, do we establish that something exists?[**[27]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-191) Whatever answer is given to this question may prove more troubling than the Quinean approach.[**[28]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-190)

Two prominent attempts to reject premise 2 are (a) the paraphrase strategy, which accepts the truth of the sentences in question yet finds a nominalist-friendly paraphrase that gets rid of the purported abstract object; and (b) the fictionalist strategy, which holds that the sentences in question are literally false and thus do not denote abstract objects.[**[29]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-189) According to paraphrase nominalism, sentences such as “Two is prime” and “Courage is a virtue” can be paraphrased without loss of meaning as, for example, “If there were numbers, two would be prime” and “Courageous persons are virtuous persons.”[**[30]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-188) As long as the paraphrase removes the troubling entity (the number two, the property *being courageous*) without a corresponding loss of meaning, we have found a nominalistically acceptable sentence. The problem, however, is that the proposed paraphrases, and many others, seem to fail. As Balaguer observes, the proposed paraphrases do not seem to capture the ordinary meaning of such simple sentences. “Two is prime” is about the number two, whereas the proposed paraphrase is about what would be the case if there were numbers.[**[31]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-187) With respect to the sentence “Courage is a virtue,” the proposed paraphrase doesn’t even share the same truth value (and thus, again, does not share the same meaning). While “Courage is a virtue” is a necessary truth, the truth value for the sentence “Courageous persons are virtuous persons” is contingent: it could turn out that a courageous person is in fact not virtuous, given moral or intellectual vices in other areas.[**[32]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-186)

The fictionalist isn’t worried about translating sentences into proper nominalistic form. Rather, all sentences that appear to commit us to the existence of abstract objects are false. The sentences “Two is prime” and “Courage is a virtue” should be treated the same way as the sentence “Oliver Twist is an orphan.” Oliver Twist doesn’t exist, yet we can still coherently make reference to him as long as we understand that we are talking about a fictional character in a story written by Charles Dickens. In the same way, argues the fictionalist, we are to construe talk about numbers, properties, and the like as make-believe. The fictionalist proposal strikes many as implausible. It seems too easy: if you don’t like the ontological implications of certain sentences, then just deny that the sentence is true. However, it seems obvious that “Two is prime” or “Courage is a virtue” are true, and necessarily so. For these reasons, while there are sophisticated proposals on offer, many are unwilling to follow the fictionalist down the antirealist path.[**[33]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-185)

[**Idealism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-50)

The final view of ultimate reality we shall consider is [**idealism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-50). While there are many versions of idealism, we shall focus on a particularly influential one developed by the British empiricist George Berkeley (1685–1753). The only kind of things that exist, according to Berkeleyan idealism, are mental things: minds and ideas. Tobe is to be perceived or to be a perceiver.[**[34]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-184) While the denial of material objects seems to go against common sense, idealism is important to consider for at least two reasons. First, the arguments in favor of idealism are a good bit stronger than one might initially suppose and thus warrant further investigation. Second, there is renewed interest in Berkeleyan idealism today, particularly among Christian theologians and philosophers, and thus it is important to understand why Christians in particular find this theory of reality attractive and superior to its competitors.[**[35]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-183)

The starting point on the path toward idealism is the modern era’s debate over the nature of perception. A commonsensical theory of perception, called [**direct realism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-27), holds that what one is directly aware of in perceptual experience is a mind-independent reality. For example, in perceiving the table, I am directly aware of the table itself. The problem with [**direct realism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-27) is that it does not seem to adequately account for special cases, such as illusion. Consider a straight stick that appears bent when placed in water. If the object of perceptual experience is the stick itself, then according to [**direct realism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-27) there should be no difference between appearance and reality.

In order to handle the problem of illusion, early modern philosophers such as Descartes and John Locke (1632–1704) advocated a theory of perception called [**representative realism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-101). According to [**representative realism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-101), in perception we are directly aware of a mental item—our sensory ideas—and indirectly aware of a mind-independent reality. We perceive physical objects—tables, rocks, trees—by way of our sensory ideas. By making a distinction between direct and indirect awareness, the representative realist can account for why, in the case of illusions, reality and appearance are distinct. For example, in the case of the straight stick, in normal circumstances the only medium between the stick and our sensory idea of the stick is the air. In the illusory case, however, the additional medium of water causes the light from the bottom part of the stick to refract, generating a difference between our sensory idea of the stick and the stick as it is in reality.

Berkeley agreed with the representative realist that the objects of our direct awareness are sensory ideas. He disagreed, however, that the objects of our sensory experience point beyond themselves to some mind-independent reality. This is because in the end, argued Berkeley, representative realism leads to skepticism. How, he asked, could we ever know that our sensory idea of a table is caused by a mind-independent table instead of a mad scientist or an evil demon? By arguing that there is only the mind-dependent reality of sensory ideas, the threat of skepticism is removed once and for all. It is important to emphasize: Berkeley is not denying that tables, rocks, and trees exist. He is simply denying their mind-independence. Physical objects are collections of ideas. Whose ideas? For Berkeley there could be only one answer: God’s ideas. Thus there are, according to Berkeleyan [**idealism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-50), two kinds of minds, divine and nondivine, and two kinds of ideas, sensory and imaginary (sensory ideas are “given”; we are passive recipients of them, whereas imaginary ideas are ideas that we “dream up” or produce through the activity of thinking).

Berkeleyan idealism, with its focus on the primacy of the mental, has a lot working in its favor, particularly for the Christian theist. For example, as a version of substance monism (only immaterial substances exist), it is simpler than pluralistic ontologies, such as metaphysical dualism; all things being equal (i.e., assuming the two types of ontologies are explanatorily on par), simplicity counts in its favor. Moreover, the idealist theory of perception is argued to be more consistent with the findings of quantum mechanics and is immune to skepticism since what we are directly aware of in perception is the mind-dependent physical reality.[**[36]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-182) Finally, if, as its adherents claim, it is consistent with Christian orthodoxy, then, contrary to initial reactions, [**idealism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-50) is a viable option for many theists.

However, Berkeleyan idealism is not without problems. On reflection, it is not obviously simpler than its dualist competitors. For example, idealists argue that the problem of causal interaction between immaterial and material substances dissolves under idealism, since all causal interactions are between mental objects only.[**[37]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-181) Unfortunately, the causal interaction problem is not solved: it is relocated.[**[38]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-180) Consider the age-old mind-body problem. The question becomes, How does my mind enjoy two-way causal interaction with the collection of divine ideas that is my body? If, as those following Berkeley think, occasionalism is true, then the interaction problem dissolves again (since God is the only causal agent in the universe), but the explanatory benefits accrued to the idealist are negated (for many philosophers) by an unattractive theory of causation. Moreover, in the end it is not clear that Berkeleyan idealism is consistent with Christian orthodoxy. Consider this: if divine ideas are part of God (and how could they not be?) and physical objects are collections of divine ideas, then physical objects are part of God. But then creation is part of God, panentheism is true, and Christian orthodoxy is called into question.[**[39]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-179) Finally, it could be argued that there are more sophisticated versions of direct realism that handle the problem of illusion (and other related issues) adequately. If so, then a chief motivation for idealism is significantly undercut.[**[40]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-178)

Conclusion

In this chapter we’ve explored three prominent views of reality: materialism, dualism, and idealism. Each view has something going for it as well as certain costs or problems that need to be overcome. Given Christian theism, we think that materialism is a nonstarter. We’re not particularly attracted to idealism either but think it should be given its due. For our part, we can learn from the materialist to value the physical world—in its beauty, diversity, and abundance—as part of the giftedness of creation. We can also learn from the idealist to remember the primacy of the spiritual or immaterial. Mind is before matter in a very important sense because God—an immaterial Mind—is the source of all concrete finite reality. Moreover, there is more to life than the constant stream of sensual and physical experience. There are immaterial and spiritual goods too, including, most importantly, communion with God through the union of our finite spirit with the infinite Spirit. Much more, of course, can be said about each of these views and more besides. What should be clear is that the interminable battle over the nature of reality shows no signs of waning anytime soon.[**[41]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-177)

[**1**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-backlink-217) C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (Westwood, NJ: Barbour Books, 1990), 11–12.

[**2**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-backlink-216) Given Christian theism, it could be argued that this battle over reality has been going on since at least the fall of Adam and Eve.

[**3**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-backlink-215) Plato, *Sophist* 246a–c, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 267–68.

[**4**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-backlink-214) These lectures were later published in Wilfrid Sellars, *Science, Perception, and Reality* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), 1–40.

[**5**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-backlink-213) While discussing materialism, dualism, and idealism, in rough outline we follow Steven B. Cowan and James S. Spiegel’s discussion of ultimate reality in *The Love of Wisdom* (Nashville: B&H, 2009), 152–72.

[**6**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-backlink-212) Reinhardt Grossmann, *The Existence of the World: An Introduction to Ontology* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 8.

[**7**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-backlink-211) Dallas Willard, “Knowledge and Naturalism,” [***Naturalism***](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-75)*: A Critical Analysis*, ed. William Lane Craig and J. P. Moreland (New York: Routledge, 2000), 25.

[**8**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-backlink-210) Alex Rosenberg, *The Atheist’s Guide to Reality: Enjoying Life without Illusions* (New York: Norton, 2011), 20 (emphasis in original).

[**9**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-backlink-209) Rosenberg, *Atheist’s Guide to Reality*, 20.

[**10**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-backlink-208) Notice that the claim “Science is the only way to acquire knowledge” is itself a piece of knowledge. But importantly, this piece of knowledge is not a deliverance from science. Rather, it is a philosophical statement about the nature of knowledge. But then, if scientism is true, it is false. It is self-defeating. So there is, contrary to Rosenberg’s claim, at least one piece of knowledge that does not come from science. If there is one piece of knowledge, it is reasonable to think there may be other pieces of knowledge from nonscientistic sources.

[**11**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-backlink-207) Rosenberg, *Atheist’s Guide to Reality*, 20.

[**12**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-backlink-206) Other phenomena that are difficult to explain in a materialistic metaphysic include free will (see chap. 10); morality (see chap. 16); knowledge (see chaps. 2 and 3); meaning (see chap. 17); the unity amid the diversity in the world (see chaps. 8 and 9); and the origin of the universe itself (see chap. 12).

[**13**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-backlink-205) Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986). Cited in Roger Scruton, *The Soul of the World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 31.

[**14**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-backlink-204) Scruton, *Soul of the World*, 31.

[**15**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-backlink-203) For more, see J. P. Moreland, *The Recalcitrant* Imago Dei *: Human Persons and the Failure of*[***Naturalism***](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-75) (Norwich, UK: SCM, 2009), 92–95.

[**16**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-backlink-202) John Searle, “Minds, Brains, and Programs,” *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 3 (1980): 417–57.

[**17**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-backlink-201) For a discussion of six differences between intentionality and physical states, see Moreland, *The Recalcitrant* Imago Dei, 91–92. For another argument from the reality of conscious intentional states to the falsity of materialism, see Laurence BonJour, “Against Materialism,” in *The Waning of*[***Materialism***](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-64), ed. Robert C. Koons and George Bealer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 15–21. For a sustained argument that the reality of consciousness cannot be accounted for by a materialist metaphysic of human persons, see the collection of essays included in *Waning of*[***Materialism***](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-64). As the editors state in the introduction, “It is . . . surprising [given the supposed dominance of a materialist metaphysics regarding human persons] that an examination of the major philosophers active in [philosophy of mind over the last sixty years] reveals that a majority, or something approaching a majority, either reject materialism or had serious and specific doubts about its ultimate viability.” *Waning of*[***Materialism***](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-64), ix.

[**18**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-backlink-200) C. S. Lewis, [***Miracles***](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-71) (New York: Touchstone, 1975), 24.

[**19**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-backlink-199) See, e.g., Alvin Plantinga, *Where the Conflict Really Lies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), chap. 10.

[**20**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-backlink-198) This sets aside sets with contingent members, which are traditionally considered abstract but nonnecessary.

[**21**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-backlink-197) See, e.g., J. P. Moreland, [***Universals***](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-117) (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2001), 17–18; Grossmann, *Existence of the World*, 7; and E. J. Lowe, *The Possibility of*[***Metaphysics***](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-69)*:*[***Substance***](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-110)*, Identity, and Time* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), 212–13.

[**22**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-backlink-196) This formulation of the Indispensability Argument is from Mark Balaguer, who calls this “The Singular Term Argument” in “Platonism in Metaphysics,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, last modified March 9, 2016, §4, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/platonism. The Indispensability Argument is historically associated with Willard V. O. Quine and Hilary Putnam and was originally formulated as an argument for the reality of abstract objects within mathematics. For other formulations of the Indispensability Argument, see Mark Colyvan, *The Indispensability of Mathematics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[**23**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-backlink-195) See Willard V. O. Quine, “On What There Is?,” in *From a Logical Point of View* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), 1–19. Quine thought we are committed ontologically only by existential expressions and not singular terms, but as Balaguer notes, most philosophers today consider both singular terms and existential quantifiers to be ontologically committing when considering a broadly Quinean criterion of ontological commitment. See Balaguer, “Platonism in [**Metaphysics**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-69),” §4. In fact, simple sentences with singular terms seem to entail true existential expressions; for example, “The apple is red” logically entails “There is something that is red.”

[**24**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-backlink-194) William Lane Craig, “Anti-Platonism,” in *Beyond the Control of God? Six Views on the Problem of God and Abstract Objects*, ed. Paul M. Gould (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 121.

[**25**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-backlink-193) Craig, “Anti-[**Platonism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-90),” 121.

[**26**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-backlink-192) For a defense of the Quinean criterion of ontological commitment, see Peter van Inwagen, “Being, Existence, and Ontological Commitment,” in *Metametaphysics: New Essays on the Foundation of Ontology*, ed. David J. Chalmers, David Manley, and Ryan Wasserman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 472–506.

[**27**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-backlink-191) For more on Meinongians (named after Alexius Meinong, 1853–1920) and linguistic approaches to ontology, see Matti Eklund, “Metaontology,” *Philosophy Compass* 1, no. 3 (2006): 317–34.

[**28**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-backlink-190) With respect to existential expressions, Craig favors a theory defended by Jody Azzouni called neutralism, where the quantifier of first-order logic does not imply any ontological commitments, and a deflationary theory of reference (defended by Arvid Bave) with respect to singular terms, where a person can use singular terms without thereby committing to the existence of the objects to which one is referring. See Craig, “Anti-[**Platonism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-90),” 119–23.

[**29**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-backlink-189) Balaguer, “Platonism in [**Metaphysics**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-69),” §4.1.

[**30**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-backlink-188) The first, according to Balaguer, is an example of what is known as if-thenism (“Platonism in Metaphysics,” §4.1). The second is discussed by Michael J. Loux, [***Metaphysics***](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-69)*: A Contemporary Introduction*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2006), 57–58.

[**31**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-backlink-187) Balaguer, “Platonism in [**Metaphysics**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-69),” §4.1.

[**32**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-backlink-186) Loux, [***Metaphysics***](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-69), 57–58.

[**33**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-backlink-185) For a sophisticated defense of fictionalism that tries to dispense with numbers in science, see Hartry Field, *Science without Numbers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980). For a robust defense of nominalism with respect to the Indispensability Argument, see Craig, “Anti-Platonism,” in *Beyond the Control of God?*, chap. 4, including the response to Craig by Keith Yandell, Paul M. Gould, Richard Brian Davis, Greg Welty, Scott A. Shalkowski, and Graham Oppy.

[**34**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-backlink-184) The classic articulation and defense of Berkeleyan idealism can be found in George Berkeley, Principles of Human Knowledge *and* Three Dialogues, ed. Howard Robinson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[**35**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-backlink-183) For recent works by Christian theologians and philosophers defending Berkeleyan idealism, see the two-volume series Idealism and Christianity, with James S. Spiegel as general editor, published in New York by Bloomsbury in 2016: vol. 1, [***Idealism***](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-50)*and Christian Theology*, ed. Joshua R. Farris and S. Mark Hamilton; vol. 2, [***Idealism***](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-50)*and Christian Philosophy*, ed. Steven B. Cowan and James S. Spiegel.

[**36**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-backlink-182) For a discussion of quantum mechanics and idealism, see especially Howard Robinson, “Idealism and Perception: Why Berkeleyan Idealism Is Not as Counterintuitive as It Seems,” in Cowan and Spiegel,[***Idealism***](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-50)*and Christian Philosophy*, 84–87.

[**37**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-backlink-181) James Spiegel argues this way in “Idealism and the Reasonableness of Theistic Belief,” in Cowan and Spiegel,[***Idealism***](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-50)*and Christian Philosophy*, 16–17.

[**38**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-backlink-180) It could be argued that the interaction problem is about how two radically different kinds of substances, material and immaterial, interact and thus, by removing material objects from the furniture of the world, [**idealism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-50) does dissolve the interaction problem. If this is correct, the general point still stands; however, another kind of problem surfaces, a near cousin of the original, now over how an immaterial [**substance**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-110) relates to the collections of divine ideas that constitute its material body. The latter problem is not the same as the former, but it is within the vicinity of it, and the question of how two radically different kinds of things interact still stands.

[**39**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-backlink-179) For a defense of the orthodoxy of Christian idealism with respect to panentheism, see Adam Groza, “Idealism and the Nature of God,” in Cowan and Spiegel, [***Idealism***](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-50)*and Christian Philosophy*, chap. 6.

[**40**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-backlink-178) For more sophisticated contemporary defenses of direct realism, see J. P. Moreland and Garrett DeWeese, “The Premature Report of Foundationalism’s Demise,” in *Reclaiming the Center*, ed. Millard J. Erickson, Paul Kjoss Helseth, and Justin Taylor (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004), chap. 4; and Dallas Willard, “How Concepts Relate the Mind to Its Objects: The ‘God’s Eye View’ Vindicated,” *Philosophia Christi* 1, no. 2 (1999): 5–20.

[**41**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body09_chapter07.xhtml#note-backlink-177) Thanks to Ross Inman for comments on an early draft of this chapter.

10Freedom and [**Determinism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-26)

It is a datum of human experience that our actions *seem* to be free. For most, this is good reason to think that we are in *fact* free. Moreover, we tend to think this to be a good thing. We think it a good thing to be self-determiners of our actions, our character, and the story of our lives. This freedom grounds our moral ascriptions of praise and blame with respect to the actions, character, and life story of others and ourselves. “Free will” is what we call this *ability* or *power to choose* our actions, character, and life story.[**[1]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-322) But there is a problem lurking below the surface with respect to free will. Consider the following dilemma:

1. If[**determinism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-26)is true, free will is an illusion.
2. If[**determinism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-26)is not true, free will is arbitrary.

[**Determinism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-26)—roughly, the idea that the future is fixed—is either true or not. Either way, free will seems to be impossible. The tension between claims 1 and 2 highlights what is often called the problem of free will. In this chapter we shall explore the problem of free will. We will be particularly interested in whether there are strategies that can be plausibly employed in order to avoid one or both horns of the dilemma highlighted by claims 1 and 2. We begin by considering [**determinism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-26).

[**Determinism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-26)

There are basically three versions of determinism: logical, theological, and physical (see fig. 10.1). In all versions of [**determinism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-26), the future is fixed by some determining factor. With logical determinism, the determining factor is the fact that propositions about the future are already true or false. Consider the act of reading *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* on your twelfth birthday. One hundred years prior to your twelfth birthday, the proposition P, “You will read *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* on your twelfth birthday,” was either true or false. Assume that the proposition P was true. If P was true, then necessarily, on your twelfth birthday, you would read *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*. But if you had no choice regarding the truth of P one hundred years ago (and how could you?), then you have no choice about reading Harry Potter on your birthday either. By the time of your twelfth birthday, it was too late: you couldn’t prevent P from being true a hundred years earlier, and it is also too late to prevent what necessarily follows from the truth of P (namely, your reading the book on your twelfth birthday). While many remain unmoved by the threat of logical determinism, the task of deciding what exactly is wrong with the above line of reasoning has proved difficult, quickly moving into areas of fundamental metaphysics regarding the nature of truth, time, dependence, and explanation.[**[2]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-321)

Theological determinism moves not from prior *truths* about what you do but from either prior *divine decrees* or *divine beliefs* about what you do.[**[3]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-320) An example of theological determinism grounded in the decrees of God is Calvinism, which endorses the claim that God is the sufficient cause of everything that happens in the world, including the good and evil actions of humans.[**[4]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-319) In a later section we will consider an example of theological [**determinism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-26) grounded in divine beliefs about future contingent acts of humans. For the remainder of this section, we’ll consider physical [**determinism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-26).

Consider the event of my hand raising at time *t*1. According to physical determinism, the event of my hand raising at *t*1 is a consequence of the past history of the universe (prior to time *t*1) and the laws of nature. The past history of the universe and the laws of nature are the determining factors of the event of my hand raising. In other words, given the past and the laws of nature, I could not have done otherwise than raise my hand at time *t*1. At any time before *t*1, the future was fixed for me: it was determined that I would raise my hand at time *t*1. If my choices and actions are inevitable, given the past and the laws of nature, then I am not free. Thus the [**argument**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-5) goes: if [**determinism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-26) is true, free will is an illusion (i.e., claim 1 of our dilemma is true).

At this point the defender of free will has two options. Such a person can deny the first part of claim 1 and argue that determinism is false or deny the second part of claim 1 and argue that freedom is *compatible* with determinism. Let’s consider the first part of claim 1. Is physical determinism true? Most philosophers think the answer to this question is an empirical matter, investigated by discovering the nature of the world.[**[5]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-318) It certainly seems as if the world operates according to fixed laws of nature. Each day is followed by night, each spring is followed by summer, acorns fall to the ground when released by oak trees, and so on. The world seems to be a grand machine operating according to the exceptionless laws of classical (Newtonian) physics. Indeed, many philosophers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries thought classical science entailed physical determinism.[**[6]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-317) However, this picture of the world is no longer taken for granted due to the advent of contemporary quantum mechanics and the possibility of probabilistic laws of nature.

If the world of elementary particles (the microworld governed by quantum mechanics) is in fact indeterministic, then physical determinism is false. While the issue is by no means settled, there seems to be somewhat of a consensus that the quantum world is indeterministic.[**[7]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-316) Let us, for the sake of argument, assume that the quantum world is indeterministic. Does the indeterminancy of the quantum world ground the possibility of genuine freedom? It is not clear that it does. While quantum indeterminancy is relevant to elementary particles and their behavior, it is not obviously relevant to larger-scale physical objects such as the human brain and body (presumably the seat of our deliberations and actions). If somehow indeterministic microevents were “amplified” so that they could produce large-scale effects within the human brain and body, such effects, like their microbase, would also happen by chance.[**[8]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-315) These large-scale effects, which result from indeterministic “quantum jumps,” are unpredictable and uncontrollable—more like a sudden twitch of the face or a random thought traversing through the mind than a responsible and hence free action.[**[9]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-314) But then we’ve avoided, in this first attempt, the rocky heights of claim 1, only to be shattered on the crags of claim 2. It is time to consider the second option for the defender of free will with respect to claim 1: the idea that freedom is compatible with [**determinism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-26) and therefore not an illusion. We begin by considering the nature of freedom.

Freedom

What are the necessary conditions for genuine freedom? Intuitively, an action or choice is free if it is one of a number of alternative possibilities. So on this way of thinking, for example, I am free with regard to my choice to wear the blue shirt if it is the case that I could also choose the red, black, or green shirt instead. This intuition undergirds claim 1 of our dilemma. If the future is not “open” in any genuine sense, if there is no power to do otherwise, then there is no freedom. Many philosophers think this is the sine qua non—the essential condition—of freedom; without it, an action or choice is simply not free. In addition, many think freedom requires that each [**agent**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-1) is ultimately responsible for their own actions and choices. The [**agent**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-1) must be the ultimate source or origin of the action or choice and not merely a passive conduit of external causes that are outside the [**agent**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-1)’s control (such as the past, the laws of nature, or the decree of God). If alternative possibilities (AP) and ultimate responsibility (UR) are necessary conditions for freedom, it is not difficult to see how [**determinism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-26) poses a threat to the possibility of freedom.

Not all, however, think freedom is incompatible with determinism. Some philosophers argue that there is no conflict between freedom and determinism. This view, known as [**compatibilism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-17), argues that claim 1 of our dilemma is false. A compatibilist who also thinks that we do have free will is called a soft determinist. In fact, the soft determinist often thinks freedom *requires* determinism. This is because, as claim 2 states, if determinism is false our actions and choices seem arbitrary, either uncaused, in which case the agent is not ultimately responsible, or caused (by reasons or desires) but not necessitated, in which case the agent acts or chooses irrationally or randomly. All that is required for freedom, says the compatibilist, is the “agent’s unhindered ability to do [or choose] what he wants.”[**[10]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-313) As long as the [**agent**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-1) does or chooses what this [**agent**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-1) wants to do or choose, and does so without coercion, the act or choice is free even if determined.

But what about AP and UR? Does the compatibilist reject our intuitively plausible conditions for genuine freedom? With respect to AP, the compatibilist (ironically!) has options. One can either provide a Conditional Analysis of AP or deny that AP is a necessary condition for freedom. The compatibilist who thinks AP is true can offer a Conditional Analysis of “what I could have done otherwise” that is consistent with being determined. To say “I could have become an accountant instead of a philosopher” is analyzed by the compatibilist as “I would have become an accountant instead of a philosopher, if I had wanted to.” There is a sense, then, says the compatibilist, in which I could have done otherwise, even though my actions and choices are determined. And if the conditional analysis of “could have done otherwise” is acceptable, then it seems the compatibilist can also affirm an important condition of what it means to be free.

Unfortunately, many philosophers think the Conditional Analysis fails. If what I want is determined, then it doesn’t seem, after all, that I really have any alternative possibilities. Recall my act of hand raising at time *t*1. If at *t*1I want to raise my hand and nothing prevents me from doing what I want with respect to my hand raising at *t*1, then my act is done freely, according to the compatibilist. But at *t*1 there are no genuine alternative possibilities before me. Given my want, a want over which I have no control, I could act in only one way. What are needed, argues the incompatibilist, are genuine alternative possibilities *at the time of* the action or choice. But given determinism, there is only one alternative at the time of the action or choice, so the conditional analysis gives the wrong results.[**[11]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-312)

The second option, to deny that AP is a necessary condition for freedom, seems more promising for the compatibilist. As it turns out, there are powerful reasons provided by compatibilists for thinking the principle of alternative possibilities is false. In 1969, the philosopher Harry Frankfurt published an influential paper that ignited the debate over the truth of AP.[**[12]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-311) Frankfurt gives various examples designed to show that someone could be responsible, and hence free, even if there was no ability to do otherwise. If these “Frankfurt-style counterexamples,” as they have come to be called, are successful, then AP is false; alternative possibilities are not required for moral responsibility or freedom. A typical Frankfurt-style counterexample is this: Suppose that Black wants Jones to kill Smith. If Jones kills Smith on his own, then Black will not intervene. If when the moment comes, however, it appears that Jones will not kill Smith (Black is an expert at reading people), then Black, who has secretly planted a chip in Jones’s brain, will press a button, manipulating Jones’s brain so that he will kill Smith. Suppose Jones wants to kill Smith and does so. Black remains in the background, and the chip in Jones’s brain is dormant. Did Jones act responsibly, and hence freely, in killing Smith? It seems that he did. We blame Jones because he killed Smith on his own and wanted to. But he could not have done otherwise. Black was ready to intervene if needed. Therefore, we have a counterexample to the claim that freedom requires AP.

There is considerable debate over whether Frankfurt-style counterexamples are successful. The defender of AP might argue that there are in fact genuine alternative possibilities in these cases. For example, while Jones does not have the alternatives of “kill Smith” or “not kill Smith,” he does have the alternative of “kill Smith on my own” or “kill Smith as a result of Black’s manipulation.”[**[13]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-310) The defender of Frankfurt-style counterexamples in turn retorts that this “flicker of freedom . . . is too thin a reed on which to rest moral responsibility.”[**[14]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-309) Alternatively, the defender of AP might argue that Frankfurt-style counterexamples presuppose the truth of determinism and thus beg the question against [**indeterminism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-54).[**[15]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-308) If freedom requires indeterminism, then the only way Black can ensure that Jones will kill Smith is to act in advance to bring it about that Jones kills Smith (after all, Black cannot ensure that he *reliably* predicts Jones’s actions given indeterminism). But if it is necessary that Black *actually* needs to intervene to ensure that Jones kills Smith, then while it is true that Jones could not have done otherwise, it is also the case that Jones is not responsible. Thus moral responsibility (and freedom) does require AP if [**indeterminism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-54) is true. At this point, there seems to be somewhat of a stalemate between the compatibilist and the incompatibilist. It is not clear whether AP is required for freedom.

What is clear is that if compatibilism is true, we must give up UR as a necessary condition for freedom.[**[16]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-307) Given compatibilism, an agent *contributes* to action—for example, I contribute to the action of raising my hand at time *t*1 by choosing to do so and moving my body in order to bring about the event of my hand raising—but the agent still is not the *ultimate* source of action. To be the ultimate source of action, nothing outside the agent guarantees the action. But, given physical determinism, the past and the laws of nature do guarantee the action. Thus the compatibilist requires that we give up on at least one, and maybe both, of the parts of our prephilosophical intuition regarding freedom.[**[17]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-306)

[**Incompatibilism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-53)

The incompatibilist argues that determinism is incompatible with freedom. That is, claim 1 of our dilemma is true. A powerful argument called the Consequence Argument has been advanced to show the incompatibility of determinism and freedom.[**[18]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-305) Informally stated, the argument is as follows: Assume determinism is true. If determinism is true, my act of hand raising at time *t*1 is the necessary consequence of the past and the laws of nature. There is nothing I can do to change the past and the laws of nature; they are beyond my control. But if my hand raising at *t*1 is a necessary consequence of the past and the laws of nature, and the past and the laws of nature are beyond my control, then my hand raising at *t*1 is also beyond my control. Generalized, since all my actions are determined, it follows that all my actions are beyond my control. That is, if [**determinism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-26) is true, there is no freedom.

The key inference of the Consequence Argument is the Principle Beta: “If there is nothing agent S can do about X, and Y is a necessary consequence of X, then there is nothing agent S can do about Y either.” Principle Beta seems intuitively true. The compatibilist, of course, rejects the Consequence Argument and focuses attention on the viability of Principle Beta. One strategy, as we have already seen, is to offer a Conditional Analysis of the word “can” found within Principle Beta and the premises of the Consequence Argument: “You can do action A” means “You would do action A if you wanted to.” But as we have seen, many think the Conditional Analysis fails. This does not mean incompatibilism wins; there are other compatibilist counterexamples to Principle Beta on offer. Still, it is safe to say that the burden of proof is on the compatibilist to provide a viable account of “can” and “could have done otherwise” that either undercuts Principle Beta or refutes other premises of the Consequence Argument.[**[19]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-304)

Assume the Consequence Argument is sound, and thus determinism is incompatible with freedom. It does not follow that there *is* freedom in the world. There are three kinds of [**incompatibilism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-53): [**hard determinism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-47), [**hard incompatibilism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-48), and [**libertarianism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-62) (see fig. 10.2). The hard deterministthinks incompatibilism and [**determinism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-26) are true and denies the reality of genuine freedom. The hard incompatibilist thinks incompatibilism is true and is unsure whether [**determinism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-26) is true or false, but either way denies the reality of genuine freedom. The libertarian (about free will, not politics) thinks [**incompatibilism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-53) is true and affirms genuine freedom. All accept claim 1 of our dilemma. The defender of libertarian freedom rejects claim 2. It is time to consider whether [**indeterminism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-54) is compatible with freedom.

The problem is that the denial of determinism isn’t enough to secure the reality of genuine freedom. J. J. C. Smart succinctly captures the worry. He argues that all events are the result of either deterministic forces (what he calls “unbroken causal continuity”) or chance. But if our actions result from chance, they are not under our control; hence, they are not *free* actions.[**[20]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-303) The idea is that there is no “space” for genuine (libertarian) freedom between something being undetermined and its happening as a matter of chance or luck. What is needed is some “extra factor” to ground libertarian freedom.[**[21]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-302) Many defenders of libertarian freedom have responded to this challenge by postulating **agents** as the needed “extra factor”: agents are the cause of undetermined yet free actions.

[**Agent Causation**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-2)

Consider again the act of my hand raising at time *t*1. Suppose the children next door are playing backyard football, and a wayward pass results in the football hitting my raised hand at time *t*2. The event of the football hitting my hand at *t*2brings about the event of the football coming to rest on the ground at *t*3. This is an example of [**event causation**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-38). But what about the act of my hand raising at *t*1? Is this also an example of eventcausation? Some think another kind of causation is at work in this act of mine, called [**agent causation**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-2). On this view, I am a substance, a continuant that is the “first cause” of my action. As an agent cause, I am a self-determiner of my actions, character, and life story. Thus I am ultimately responsible (UR) and in many cases (if not all cases, depending on the role of character in influencing choices and actions) able to do otherwise (AP). As Roderick Chisholm puts it, “Each of us, when we act, is a prime mover unmoved. In doing what we do, we cause certain events to happen, and nothing—or no one—causes us to cause those events to happen.”[**[22]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-301)

While agency theory is an attractive “extra factor,” a factor that seems to capture the way we experience our own choices and activity, many find the idea at worst incoherent or at best deeply mysterious. A prominent objection to agent causation is that it does not eliminate randomness: if the free actions of agents are undetermined, then given the *exact* prior circumstances, an agent could have chosen (say) A or B. But then it seems that the actual choice made by the agent is entirely random and arbitrary. Hence, it is argued, agent causation is incoherent. In response, the agent theorist points out that the reasons and purposes of an agent can play a role, as motivating factors, in the agent’s self-determining choices. Reasons and purposes influence the agent’s choices without causing them. I raised my hand at *t*1 because I wanted to; I was exercising (let’s say) in order to remain healthy. This reason (“I wanted to”) and purpose (“in order to remain healthy”) influenced my decision to raise my hand at *t*1. If so, then the choices and actions of agents are not random: they are done for reasons.[**[23]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-300) Regarding the charge of mystery, while it can be granted that agent causation is to some extent mysterious, it is no more mysterious than the concept of causation itself (which, as Hume and others have taught us, is notoriously difficult to analyze). Moreover, the worry of mystery is mitigated by the fact that we are more familiar with agent causation, via introspection into our own experience, than we are with event causation. It is more basic; our concept of event causation is arguably parasitic on our experience as causal agents. Finally, while agent causation might be difficult to reconcile with naturalism and its preference for event causation, it fits nicely within a broadly theistic view of the world. If God exists and is the first cause of the physical universe, agent causation is one of the most basic facts of reality.[**[24]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-299) We conclude: there are good reasons to think that agent causation is the necessary “extra factor” for libertarian freedom.[**[25]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-298)

In summary, if there is to be genuine (libertarian) freedom, the following four conditions must be met: (1) incompatibilism is true, (2) the agent is ultimately responsible for his or her choices and actions (UR), (3) agent causation is true, and (4) at least sometimes there are alternative possibilities (AP) (see table 10.1).[**[26]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-297)

|  |
| --- |
| **Table 10.1. Necessary Conditions for Libertarian Freedom** |
| [**Incompatibilism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-53) | Freedom is not compatible with being determined. |
| Ultimate Responsibility (UR) | The [**agent**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-1) is the ultimate source of the self’s choices and actions. |
| [**Agent Causation**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-2) | The [**agent**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-1) is the “first cause” of one’s own choices and actions. |
| Alternative Possibilities (AP) | The [**agent**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-1) “could have done otherwise” with respect to choices or actions (either at the time of the choice or action or at earlier “will-setting moments”). |

God and Freedom

The debate over the problem of free will intensifies when the existence and nature of God are factored in. Consider the question of whether human freedom is compatible with divine foreknowledge. The problem is this: God, as traditionally conceived, is omniscient. From eternity past, God knows that I will raise my hand at time *t*1 (i.e., God foreknows the future). God’s past belief about what I will do at *t*1 is something over which I have no control. Moreover, since God cannot be mistaken in his beliefs, I will necessarily raise my hand at *t*1. But if I will necessarily raise my hand at *t*1, then I am not free.

In order to understand prominent responses to the problem of divine foreknowledge and human freedom, consider the following set of jointly inconsistent claims:

1. 3. God has exhaustive foreknowledge of the future.
2. 4. I have no control over God’s past beliefs about the future.
3. 5.[**Determinism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-26)is true.
4. 6. There is libertarian freedom.

In order to render this set consistent, one or more of these claims must be rejected. The compatibilist accepts claims 3–5 and rejects claim 6. Human freedom is compatible with being determined. However, many think theistic compatibilism is unacceptable.[**[27]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-296) While it is difficult with all versions of compatibilism to account for human moral responsibility, theistic compatibilism seems to render God as the ultimate cause of all human actions and thereby the author of sin and evil. Moreover, it is not clear, on theistic compatibilism, that God desires all to be saved (contrary to 1 Tim. 2:4). The damned are consigned to hell by virtue of God’s sovereign decree, a decree issued long before they were born. As a result, it is hard to make sense of the claim that God is wholly good. Given the apparent insuperability of these worries, many theists will be attracted to libertarian accounts of freedom.[**[28]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-295)

The defender of libertarian freedom will, of course, reject claim 5, but in order to do so will also need to reject either claim 3 or claim 4 since, as we have seen, 5 is entailed by 3 and 4. The open theist rejects claim 3: God does not have exhaustive foreknowledge of the future. The future is “open”; God is a “risk taker” who in love willingly exposes himself to the real possibility of failure and disappointment.[**[29]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-294) While there are important defenders of open theism, it has not garnered wide acceptance among traditional theists.[**[30]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-293) This is partly because [**open theism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-85) seems to undermine the phenomenon of biblical prophecy and calls into question God’s ability to bring his plan for the world to fulfillment.

Others reject claim 4. The Molinist, for example, argues that in addition to foreknowledge, God possesses “middle knowledge”: knowledge of what libertarianly free creatures *would* do in any particular situation.[**[31]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-292) Thus, given [**Molinism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-72) (named after Luis de Molina [1535–1600]), we do have a kind of power over the past; we have *counterfactual power* over God’s past beliefs. If I were to act differently at time *t*1 (e.g., and not raise my hand), God’s middle knowledge would have been different, and he would have foreknown that I will not raise my hand at *t*1. God’s past beliefs *track* our future choices, but (given Molinism) they do not determine (or cause) our future choices.[**[32]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-291) [**Ockhamism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-84) is another view that rejects claim 4. The Ockhamist solution, first put forth by William of Ockham (1285–1347), makes a distinction between hard facts (facts simply about the past) and soft facts (facts not simply about the past since they depend on something that happens in the future). With this distinction in place, the Ockhamist claims that while it is not in our power to affect hard facts about the past, it is in our power to affect soft facts about the past, and God’s past beliefs about what I will do are all soft facts.[**[33]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-290) While [**Molinism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-72) or [**Ockhamism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-84) are not without problems, they represent attractive solutions to the problem of divine foreknowledge and human freedom that account for our prephilosophical intuitions about the nature of freedom and moral responsibility, all the while preserving a high view of divine sovereignty, a robust doctrine of divine omniscience, and belief in the goodness of God.

Conclusion

In this chapter we’ve explored “the problem of free will.” The problem is multifaceted, requiring attention to the question of determinism, the nature of moral responsibility, the possibility of [**agent causation**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-2), and the role of character in choice and action. Adding God into the mix further complicates things. While we side with the incompatibilist (and the virtue libertarian), we think there is freedom here to maneuver as a Christian and, as with many areas of philosophical and theological investigation, would encourage you to hold your position as thoughtfully as you can with intellectual humility and theological modesty.

[**1**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-backlink-322) Meghan Griffith, *Free Will: The Basics* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 3.

[**2**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-backlink-321) For an excellent overview of the current debate over logical determinism (often called logical fatalism), see the introduction by John Martin Fischer and Patrick Todd to *Freedom, Fatalism, and Foreknowledge*, ed. Fischer and Todd (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 1–38.

[**3**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-backlink-320) Fischer and Todd, *Freedom, Fatalism, and Foreknowledge*, 22.

[**4**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-backlink-319) Robert Kane, *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 148.

[**5**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-backlink-318) Kevin Timpe, *Free Will in Philosophical Theology* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 8.

[**6**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-backlink-317) But for an argument that classical science does not entail physical determinism, see Alvin Plantinga, *Where the Conflict Really Lies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), chap. 3.

[**7**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-backlink-316) For a helpful discussion of the relevant issues in interpreting quantum mechanics, see Tim Maudlin, “Distilling Metaphysics from Quantum Physics,” in *The Oxford Handbook of*[***Metaphysics***](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-69), ed. Michael J. Loux and Dean W. Zimmerman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 461–87.

[**8**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-backlink-315) Robert C. Bishop considers various routes for amplification such as Chaos Theory and Nonequilibrium Statistical Mechanics, in “Chaos, Indeterminism, and Free Will,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, ed. Robert Kane (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 119–21.

[**9**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-backlink-314) Kane, *Introduction to Free Will*, 9.

[**10**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-backlink-313) Griffith, *Free Will*, 41. This is the view of the “classic compatibilist” of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, such as Hobbes and Hume.

[**11**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-backlink-312) Griffith, *Free Will*, 42.

[**12**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-backlink-311) Harry Frankfurt, “Alternative Possibilities and Moral Responsibility,” *Journal of Philosophy* 66 (1969): 829–39. Frankfurt’s principle of alternative possibilities (PAP) focuses on moral responsibility, whereas AP above focuses on freedom. We are treating Frankfurt’s PAP as roughly synonymous with AP, since it is widely held that agents are morally responsible for their own actions or choices only if free.

[**13**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-backlink-310) Griffith, *Free Will*, 45.

[**14**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-backlink-309) John Martin Fischer, “Frankfurt-type Examples and Semi-Compatibilism,” in Kane, *Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, 289. This essay is an excellent overview of the debate about Frankfurt-style counterexamples. Fischer’s own view is that [**determinism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-26) probably does rule out alternative possibilities, but moral responsibility and freedom do not require alternative possibilities. This view is called semicompatibilism. Alternatively, some argue that even if AP (alternative possibilities) is false, [**determinism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-26) does rule out responsibility and freedom since freedom and responsibility require only UR (ultimate responsibility). This incompatibilist view is called source [**incompatibilism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-53).

[**15**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-backlink-308) This objection is called “The Indeterminist World Objection” by Kane. See Kane, *Introduction to Free Will*, 87–88.

[**16**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-backlink-307) For what follows in this paragraph, see Griffith, *Free Will*, 47.

[**17**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-backlink-306) For an overview of more sophisticated new compatibilist theories, see Kane, *Introduction to Free Will*, chaps. 9 and 10; and Griffith, *Free Will*, chap. 4.

[**18**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-backlink-305) The Consequence Argument has been ably defended by, among others, Peter van Inwagen, *An Essay on Free Will* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983); Carl Ginet, *On Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); and Timothy O’Connor, “Indeterminism and Free Agency: Three Recent Views,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 53 (1993): 499–526.

[**19**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-backlink-304) For a nice overview of contemporary compatibilist responses to the Consequence Argument, see Tomis Kapitan, “A Master Argument for Incompatibilism?,” in Kane, *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, chap. 6. See also Peter van Inwagen, “Free Will Remains a Mystery,” in Kane, *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, chap. 7, for van Inwagen’s discussion of a successful counterexample to one understanding of Principle Beta and his fix. Van Inwagen remains convinced that Principle Beta is valid and the Consequence [**Argument**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-5) sound.

[**20**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-backlink-303) J. J. C. Smart, “Free Will, Praise and Blame,” in *Free Will*, ed. Gary Watson, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 63.

[**21**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-backlink-302) Kane, *Introduction to Free Will*, 39.

[**22**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-backlink-301) Roderick M. Chisholm, “Human Freedom and the Self,” in Watson, *Free Will*, 34.

[**23**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-backlink-300) For a robust defense of agent causation, including reasons and explanations for actions, see Timothy O’Connor, “Agent Causation,” in *Agents, Causes, and Events: Essays on*[***Indeterminism***](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-54)*and Free Will*, ed. Timothy O’Connor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), chap. 10.

[**24**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-backlink-299) For more on the difficulty of squaring agent causation with materialism, see J. A. Cover and John O’Leary-Hawthorne, “Free Agency and Materialism,” in *Faith, Freedom, and Rationality*, ed. Daniel Howard-Snyder and Jeff Jordan (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996), 47–72. For an argument that libertarian free will is incompatible with naturalism, see Jason Turner, “The Incompatibility of Free Will and Naturalism,” *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 87, no. 4 (2009): 565–87.

[**25**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-backlink-298) For a survey of alternative “extra factor” strategies for the defender of libertarian freedom, see Kane, *Introduction to Free Will*, chap. 5; and Griffith, *Free Will*, chap. 5.

[**26**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-backlink-297) Virtue Libertarianism, a view consistent with the above conditions for freedom, allows that an agent might not have genuine alternative possibilities at the time of an action. Still, the agent did, at some point in the near or distant past, have alternative possibilities and thus is responsible for the self’s character. Thus if we understand AP broadly as alternative possibilities at the time of a decision or action or some time in the causal past (at key “will-setting moments”), we can preserve the connection between alternative possibilities and responsibility and allow a role for character in our account of libertarian freedom. Virtue Libertarianism is a version of Soft Libertarianism, which is the view that alternative possibilities are not always required for genuine freedom (or not always required at the time of the action or choice). For more on Virtue Libertarianism, see Timpe, *Free Will in Philosophical Theology*.

[**27**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-backlink-296) See, e.g., Jerry L. Walls, “Why No Classical Theist, Let Alone Orthodox Christian, Should Ever Be a Compatibilist,” *Philosophia Christi* 13, no. 1 (2011): 75–104. In reply, see Steven B. Cowan and Greg A. Welty, “*Pharaoh’s Magicians Redivivus*: A Response to Jerry Walls on Christian Compatibilism,” *Philosophia Christi* 17, no. 1 (2015): 151–73. But see Jerry Walls, “Pharaoh’s Magicians Foiled Again: Reply to Cowan and Welty,” *Philosophia Christi* 17, no. 2 (2015): 411–26, and in response Steven B. Cowan and Greg A. Welty, “Won’t Get Foiled Again: A Rejoinder to Jerry Walls,” *Philosophia Christi* 17, no. 2 (2015): 427–42.

[**28**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-backlink-295) Arguably, the biblical position on human freedom is underdetermined. It may be that Scripture is *consistent* with both compatibilism and libertarianism (yet see the preceding footnote for Walls’s arguments that Scripture *demands* libertarianism). For an excellent discussion of how to understand the biblical teaching on the nature of human freedom, see Thomas H. McCall, *An Invitation to Analytic Christian Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015), chap. 2.

[**29**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-backlink-294) William Hasker, “A Philosophical Perspective,” in *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God*, by Clark Pinnock et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994), 151.

[**30**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-backlink-293) In addition to Hasker and other contributors to *The Openness of God*, important defenders of Open Theism include Richard Swinburne and Peter van Inwagen. For bibliographical information on key philosophical defenders of Open Theism, see the introduction to Fischer and Todd, *Freedom, Fatalism, and Foreknowledge*, 26–27.

[**31**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-backlink-292) For more on [**Molinism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-72), see the discussion in chapter 14.

[**32**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-backlink-291) For more, see William Lane Craig, “Middle Knowledge: A Calvinist-Arminian Rapprochement?,” in *The Grace of God and the Will of Man*, ed. Clark H. Pinnock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989), 141–64.

[**33**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body12_chapter10.xhtml#note-backlink-290) For more, see Alvin Plantinga, “On Ockham’s Way Out,” *Faith and Philosophy* 3, no. 3 (1986): 235–69.

# 11Minds, Bodies, and Human Persons

Philosophers ask questions about all sorts of things. We wonder about the nature of reality, the existence of God, the possibility of gaining knowledge of the world, and the basis of our moral inclinations. But philosophers also ask questions about persons in general and what it means to be a *human* person in [**particular**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-87). What exactly is a human being? What makes us unique? And how is it that we manage to continue existing across time? These might sound like bizarre or even unnecessary questions, but a casual reflection on our lives in the world suggests that these questions are highly important. What are we exactly? How are we put together? What is my relationship to my body? And is there more to me than just my body?

Questions like these have been a central topic of debate throughout the history of philosophy, but especially in contemporary philosophy. Generally speaking, substance dualist philosophers—such as Plato in the ancient world and the seventeenth-century philosopher René Descartes—made a sharp distinction between bodies and souls (or minds), suggesting that they were two distinct kinds of things. In addition to this, Plato and Descartes argued that persons were to be identified with the soul (or mind) and not the body. This view has been widely held throughout most of philosophical history and continues to have able defenders to this day.[**[1]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body13_chapter11.xhtml#note-344) Nevertheless, Plato and Descartes’s view has not been the only one. In the modern period, for example, philosophers like Locke and Hume rejected such substantival views, arguing instead that persons are nothing more than a cluster of psychological dispositions, beliefs, and memories. Still later, a long list of other philosophers from modernity to the present have argued that human persons are material beings through and through.

The purpose of this chapter is not so much to trace the history of these debates, as important as they may be. Rather, the purpose is to sift through the various topics, concepts, and questions that guide philosophers in the current discussion and to help students find their footing in such discussions. To do this, we will first lay out some basic terms and concepts at play in the conversation, highlighting some of the most important questions on the subject along the way. After that, we will offer a quick survey of the most common positions on the questions of human nature and constitution.

## Basic Terms and Concepts

In one sense, terms like “mind,” “soul,” “body,” “person,” and “human person” seem to be rather straightforward and understandable. We use them every day with ease, and we know what they mean when people use them in general conversation. But other terms, like “substances,” are less familiar and can cause confusion. Furthermore, even with the more familiar terms like “minds,” “souls,” and “persons,” philosophers tend to use them in unique ways and with layers of nuance and technicality. Hence, given the nuance and technical nature of the philosophical debate around these issues, it is important to begin the discussion with a quick survey of how they are used in philosophical discourse.

### **Substances**

The notion of “substance” is as old as philosophy itself and comes into play within the broader field of [**metaphysics**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-69). It was first introduced by Aristotle, but similar notions can be found with thinkers before him. According to Aristotle, a [**substance**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-110) is something that is composed of both matter and form. Consider a cup that you drink from. What is it that makes it a cup? Aristotle would describe the cup as composed of the material stuff of wood or heat-cured clay as well as the form that is imposed on the material to give it the structure of a cup. Only when the two come together do we have the [**substance**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-110) of a cup.

As we saw in chapter 9, discussions about substances have evolved over time. Contemporary philosophers, for example, tend to think about substances differently than Aristotle conceived of them. In these discussions, philosophers typically focus their attention on the kinds of criteria that must be met in order to identify a thing as a [**substance**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-110). According to Peter Simons, various factors have been suggested in recent history. Summarizing the discussion of Aristotelian [**substance**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-110) from chapter 9, four distinct criteria seem to be most common. First, substances are often thought of as the bearers of properties. Consider, once again, Rosie the chicken. Notice how I mentioned that she is a chicken. That is to say, Rosie has the property of being a chicken. As such, she is the bearer of a property. Metaphysicians regularly note that this is a major feature of substances. They bear properties or qualities but are not themselves a property or quality of some other thing.

Second, substances can be conceived as allowing for individuation. In other words, substances allow for things to be individuated and distinct from other things. Consider the two chickens Rosie and Ronnie. They are two distinct chickens, not one. Each individual chicken is a [**substance**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-110) that is distinct from the other, no matter how similar they appear to be physically. As substances they are individuated from each other.

Third, substances are the kinds of things that can exist on their own. This is not to say that they don’t have to have a cause for their existence. Rather, it is to say that their existence does not ride on some other thing such that if that other thing ceased to exist, then the [**substance**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-110) would too. Consider the shadow of a tree. If the tree were not there to block the rays of the sun, then surely the shadow would not be there. In this case, the shadow cannot exist on its own. Substances are different since they are the kinds of things that don’t need some other thing to exist. Rosie sits by herself and does not depend on anything else around or beside her.

Finally, substances can be thought of as things that are capable of surviving changes. That is, a substance can sustain a change of some kind and continue to be what it is and continue to be the one that it was.[**[2]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body13_chapter11.xhtml#note-343) Again, Rosie is helpful. When Rosie first hatched from her eggshell, she had yellow feathers. But as she grew and developed, she lost her yellow feathers and replaced them with reddish brown feathers. Did Rosie change in some way? Yes, of course. Yet is she still a chicken? Yes, of course. Is she the same chicken she once was? Again, yes, of course! These four criteria are helpful for our purposes in this chapter since much of the debate on the topic of human persons revolves around the validity of [**substance dualism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-111).

### **Minds and Souls**

Setting forth the meaning of words like “minds” and “souls” in the current debates is a little more difficult. For starters, these terms can be used interchangeably by theologians and philosophers. This interchange is somewhat understandable since there is indeed much overlap in what is meant by each term. But they do not always mean exactly the same thing. Another difficulty comes from the fact that each term seems to carry a different level of meaning depending on the [**particular**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-87) view held by the person treating the question. In other words, different theories of mind define minds differently; so also different views of the soul define souls differently. What philosophers and theologians mean by these terms depends at least in part on who is speaking and the view they espouse. Despite these tendencies, however, we shall offer a quick survey of the ways these terms are used.

So what are minds? At minimum, minds are entities that facilitate rational processes and process intelligent functions. But if this is all they are, then there is no reason to say that humans, animals, angels, or divine persons are all that could qualify as having minds. On this view, we could also include computers as minds. For most philosophers, however, this definition is not enough. Most go beyond this to include other important features in their conception of minds. Most views of the mind suggest that minds are thinking things, thus capable of reflection and metacognition. Regardless of what kinds of stuff minds are composed of—physical brains or spiritual substances—most philosophers throughout history have generally agreed that minds are the kinds of things that think, reason, and reflect. But this raises the question of what exactly it is that composes minds, and this takes us into another view of minds. As suggested above, while some believe that physical brains are capable by themselves of facilitating such metacognitive thought, philosophers like Plato, Descartes, and many more have argued that only immaterial substances could ever think. And so, for Plato and Descartes, minds are distinct from physical brains and physical bodies and are instead composed of something nonphysical.[**[3]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body13_chapter11.xhtml#note-342) On this view, minds have a spiritual element over and above the brain, even if minds are intimately connected with brains.

With this in view, it is easy to see why terms like “mind” and “soul” are used interchangeably. Those employing the term “soul” typically use that term to refer to immaterial substances that are capable of thought, reflection, desire, intention, direction, and conscious experiences. As we shall see below, this is the view espoused by substance dualists. But once again, this is not the only way the word “soul” is used. For hylomorphists (Greek: *hylē*= matter; *morphē* = form), a soul is not actually a spiritual immaterial substance. Rather, it is the substantial form—the organizing principle that gives life and structure to the physical body—of the body that it gives life to.[**[4]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body13_chapter11.xhtml#note-341)

### **Persons and Human Persons**

Most of us never wonder what it means to be a person. We don’t struggle to recognize and categorize the various beings we encounter into the proper categories in which they belong. When we meet a new dog, for example, we don’t wonder if it is a person. We recognize it as a dog and would likely dispute any suggestion by others that the dog is a person. But if we had to dispute the claim that dogs are persons, how would we do it? What does the dog lack that we possess? This question forces us to ask a broader question: What exactly is a person?

Some initial answers might go as follows. Perhaps persons are beings or entities with minds and therefore capable of thought and reflection as described above. While most philosophers would agree that having a mind is a necessary condition for persons, they would also tend to agree that it is not a sufficient condition for personhood. That is, having a mind may be a minimal criterion but would not by itself make something a person. In short, while animals like dogs clearly and significantly differ from human beings in their mental life, it is also the case that animals think. Perhaps, then, one might say that persons have conscious experiences like tasting sugar or hearing wind blow and that this is what makes us persons. But again, it surely seems as though dogs do the same thing. They clearly like certain kinds of foods and respond to the sound of our voices. It certainly looks as though they have some kind of conscious experience. Or perhaps one may say that the difference between us and dogs that makes it possible to say that humans are persons and dogs are not is that humans are just more intelligent. While this is certainly true, it again doesn’t seem to convey the distinction between animals and persons. It seems like there is something more.

Lynne Rudder Baker’s work is helpful on this point. She argues that persons have two distinct qualities that other nonperson animals don’t: intentional states and first-person perspective. The intentional-states criterion requires that, at minimum, a person has mental states like desiring, intending, and planning. So, for example, persons are the kinds of things that desire to get married, intend to do so, and then develop a plan to go about accomplishing this. But here again, this criterion is clearly not a sufficient condition for personhood since many animals demonstrate these capacities on a regular basis. Baker adds an additional condition that is the most important one for us to consider. According to Baker, a person is some kind of being that has first-person perspective. She says, “To be a person—whether God, an angel, a human person, or a Martian person—one must have the capacity for a first-person perspective.”[**[5]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body13_chapter11.xhtml#note-340) She explains this further, saying, “The defining characteristic of person is a first-person perspective.”[**[6]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body13_chapter11.xhtml#note-339) But what does this mean? In other words, first-person perspective requires more than me being able to have desires, intentions, and plans: it is a metacognition about myself that requires me to realize that *it is I who has such desires, intentions, and plans*. It is this first-person awareness of my mental states that seems to be the key for Baker’s account. Baker’s criteria seem to get at something that truly differentiates persons from nonpersons. Even still, we might add at least one additional component to our understanding of persons: moral inclinations. Persons are the kinds of beings that operate and act in moral categories. We have a sense of oughtness and responsibility that drives and shapes us. This is a major difference from animals and nonpersons. Thus we suggest that persons are beings with intentional states, [**first-person perspective**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-43), and moral inclinations.

Notice that the above discussion is about persons in general. It does not distinguish specific kinds of persons. Because of this, we need to say something more with regard to what it means to be a *human* person. Nevertheless, what we have said thus far about persons in general will apply to the question of human persons, even if there is more to say about this specific case. In addition to being entities with intentional states, first-person perspective, and moral inclinations, human persons are persons who are related in some way to human bodies. The relationship of person to the human body is a matter of debate between the various positions. For materialist views, that relationship is very strong. On these views, the human person either is identical to the living human body or is at least constituted by the living human body. According to substance dualist views, however, the relationship to the human body is not as strong. On this view, the human person is just the soul/mind, and its relationship to the body is one of possession. In other words, the person is the soul and has a body.

Scores of views might be enumerated here, but three major views have tended to dominate the debates of the past and the present: (1) [**substance dualism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-111), (2) materialism and physicalism, and (3) some middle position between the first two that we might call [**hylomorphism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-49). We shall see the differences of these views as we go forward.

## [Substance Dualism](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-111)

The most widely held view throughout philosophical history is called [**substance dualism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-111). This was the view of Plato and, later, Descartes. Plato, Descartes, and others who hold this view typically make two distinct ontological claims regarding human constitution. First, [**substance**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-110) dualists make what we might call a stuff distinction claim. On this view, there are two distinct kinds of stuff with regard to human persons: physical bodies and nonphysical souls or minds. Bodies and souls are radically different from each other and must be thought of as fundamentally different substances. Being different substances, the body and the soul have different identities, bear different properties, survive different kinds of events, and can exist apart from each other.

Substance dualists, however, make an additional claim, and this is the one that is most essential to understand. The second claim is the person/soul identity claim: while there may be two distinct kinds of stuff, persons are distinct from their bodies and identical to their souls. In this claim, in other words, substance dualists contend that human persons are not their physical bodies. Human persons may have physical bodies, but they are not their bodies. Instead, substance dualists argue that human persons are souls that inhabit or possess their bodies. As J. P. Moreland and Scott Rae suggest in their account, “Human persons are identical to immaterial substances, namely, to souls.”[**[7]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body13_chapter11.xhtml#note-338) Or as Stewart Goetz puts it, “One of the things that I, as an ordinary person, believe about myself is that I am a soul that is distinct from my physical (material) body.”[**[8]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body13_chapter11.xhtml#note-337)

Like other views, substance dualism has its strengths and weaknesses. This view, for example, seems to have a rather easy time accounting for things like conscious experience and personal persistence across time. Consider the experience we have when we taste a soda. In this case there clearly are particular kinds of physical events that take place on a chemical level on the tongue and in the mouth. With these, there are also corresponding brain events in the neural firings of the brain. Interestingly, however, the actual experience of *tasting* the soda doesn’t appear to be reducible to the physical events of the mouth or the brain event in the neurons. To account for the actual experience of tasting, it looks as though something beyond the physical body and brain is required. John Searle puts it this way: “Materialists have a problem: once you have described the material facts in the world, you still seem to have a lot of mental phenomena left over. Once you have described the facts about my body and my brain, for example, you still seem to have a lot of facts left over about my beliefs, desires, pains, etc.”[**[9]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body13_chapter11.xhtml#note-336) Searle goes on to state that this problem has often led materialists to try to simply explain consciousness away or eliminate consciousness. But this is rather problematic since consciousness is so obviously real. Searle observes that getting rid of consciousness “is not an easy thing to do. It sounds too implausible to say right out that pains and beliefs and desires don’t exist, though some philosophers have said that.”[**[10]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body13_chapter11.xhtml#note-335) [**Substance**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-110) dualists have no such problem. In their ontology, there is plenty of space for the mental life and conscious experience, and it seems far easier to account for such things with the existence of the soul.

[**Substance**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-110) dualists also appear to have an easier time accounting for the persistence of the person across time. Consider what happens in our experience. Take, for example, Bernie’s development and change throughout his life. Bernie was born in 1976, his body was twenty-one inches long, he weighed six pounds and thirteen ounces, and he had no hair. Of course, his body didn’t stay that way. It grew and changed over time as he ate food and his body metabolized it. By the time he was three years old, he was forty inches tall, weighed thirty-eight pounds, and had curly blond hair. The process of growth and development continued over time until he reached his full growth potential of five feet, eleven inches in height, weighed two hundred pounds, and had thick brown hair that was still a little curly.

Two things are interesting about this growth process. First, to put it roughly, his body experienced significant changes over time and was even composed of different parts along the way as his body metabolized food and discarded old parts that wore out. Second, despite these changes Bernie continued to be exactly the same person he was at the earlier moments of life, when his body was very different. That is, Bernie of 1976 and Bernie of today are exactly the same person. What allowed for Bernie to continue being Bernie even though his body was constantly changing? Substance dualists have a rather straightforward and easy answer to this question: his soul. No matter what one thinks about [**substance dualism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-111) in general, and despite what other materialistic answers might be given to the question of personal persistence across time, one has to respect the simplicity and elegance of the [**substance**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-110) dualist’s answer to this question.

But, as is well noted throughout history, [**substance dualism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-111) seems to face a rather perplexing issue known as the mind-body interaction problem. This problem involves a seeming impossibility of immaterial minds interacting with the material body. If, as [**substance**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-110) dualists say, bodies and souls are radically different substances, one being material and the other being immaterial, how is it that the two interact with each other? As we consider the nature of bodies and souls as described by [**substance**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-110) dualists, our normal understanding of causation seems to go out the window.

Consider the case of two dominoes that fall in a causal sequence. Why is it that domino B fell? It fell because domino A caused it to fall when it fell and hit domino B. And how exactly did A’s hitting B cause B to fall? It caused it to fall by (1) coming into contact with B and (2) transferring energy from itself into B. Can this understanding of causation work for bodies and souls? It doesn’t seem so, since immaterial souls have no mass and do not take up space. Therefore the body and the soul (1) cannot come into contact with each other and (2) cannot transfer energy to each other. Or at least so it seems. Perplexing questions like these have caused philosophers over the centuries to reject substance dualism. In Descartes’s own time, Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia raised this very concern: “I admit that it would be easier for me to concede matter and extension to the soul than to concede the capacity to move a body and to be moved by it to an immaterial thing.”[**[11]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body13_chapter11.xhtml#note-334) In other words, for Princess Elisabeth, the interaction problem was so significant that she found it easier just to believe that minds/souls were material things than it was to believe that an immaterial thing could interact with material objects. To this day, many philosophers continue to think that this concern is a defeater for [**substance dualism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-111). But, of course, defenders of the position disagree. The debate rages on!

## [Materialism](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-64) and Physicalism

Generally speaking, in philosophical discussions of human persons the terms “[**materialism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-64)” and “physicalism” are synonymous and interchangeable. Some may make certain subtle distinctions between the two, but we shall use them interchangeably in what follows. Materialists take a much different approach to the question of human persons than substance dualists. Specifically, they reject the existence of immaterial substances like souls or minds. While distinct materialistic views share this belief in “material [**monism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-73),” the actual details of distinct views can vary considerably. We won’t have the space to address all of them, but a sampling of some of the most common views can be offered.

### **Psychological Continuity Model**

One notable view, adopted by Descartes’s contemporary John Locke (1632–1704), is called the psychological continuity model of persons. This view rejects the notion of immaterial souls/minds and affirms the idea that the “self” is a bundle or cluster of psychological properties composed of memories, beliefs, and psychological dispositions. Moreover, some [**particular**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-87) “self,” or we could say more generally “person,” persists across time as long as there is psychological continuity across time. Locke famously says:

For as far as any intelligent being can repeat the *idea* of any past action with the same consciousness it had of it at first, and with the same consciousness it has of any present action; so far it is the same *personal self*. For it is by the consciousness it has its present thoughts and actions, that it is *self* to *itself* now, and so will be the same *self*, as far as the same consciousness can extend to actions past or to come, . . . with . . . the same consciousness uniting those distant actions into the same *person*, whatever substances contributed to their production.[**[12]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body13_chapter11.xhtml#note-333)

That is, as long as the psychological bundle of properties—beliefs, desires, dispositions, and so forth—continue to exist, the person continues to exist.

### [Eliminativism](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-33)

In recent philosophical history, a more radical materialist ontology known as [**eliminativism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-33) has been adopted by some philosophers. This is a radical view because it suggests that the best way to handle mental properties and states is simply to deny them altogether, or at least to deny the vast majority of them. In this model, there are no such things as “beliefs,” “pains,” “desires,” or “feels.” Some advocates of this view would even say that there is no such thing as free will or the self. On this account of minds, there are only brains and brain events. This view is called [**eliminativism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-33) because it eliminates minds and mental properties entirely.

Technically speaking, by eliminating the mental, this view says that no one ever feels pain or tastes anything. As one might imagine, this is not a very popular view among materialists, simply because it seems so counterintuitive. Even though they universally reject immaterial substances, materialists generally recognize the reality of our experiences of pain, tastes, hopes, and joys. The eliminativist’s attempt to get rid of such things just doesn’t seem to work.

### **Reductionism and**[Identity Theory](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-51)

Other materialists offer a slightly less radical account of the mental. Reductionists, for example, do not deny that we feel pain, taste sugar, or have hope. Rather, they simply reduce those things, which are typically thought of as mental events or properties, to brain events or physical properties. That is, those phenomena are just, or are nothing but, physical properties or events in the brain. One very common expression of this is called [**identity theory**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-51), which claims that minds and brains are identical to each other. To describe a mind is just to describe a brain. Hence our understanding of the mind is nothing more than our understanding of the brain. On the surface, it may seem as though the reductionists and identity theorists are saying exactly the same thing as the eliminativist, but they actually aren’t. Pete Mandik offers a helpful comparison:

The simple form of mind-brain identity theory says that pains are nothing but a certain kind of brain state—c-fibers firing. The simple form of eliminative materialism says that there are no pains—there are only c-fibers firing. Both theories agree that c-fibers firing exist. But do both agree that there are no pains, that pains do not exist? No, they do not, and this is the key difference between them. The mind-brain identity theorist’s statement in terms of “nothing but” may make it seem like the existence of pains is being denied, but this is not so. The “nothing but” claim—the claim that pains are nothing but c-fibers firing—is not telling us that pains are nothing at all. Instead, it is simply saying that pains are nothing additional, they are nothing beyond c-fibers. . . . In contrast, the eliminative materialist is outright denying that pains are identical to c-fibers firing. Pains aren’t identical to anything at all—they don’t even exist according to the eliminative materialist.[**[13]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body13_chapter11.xhtml#note-332)

As Mandik makes clear, reductionist views like [**identity theory**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-51) have some similarities to eliminativist accounts of the mind, but [**identity theory**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-51) is a less radical view that doesn’t reject the commonsense notion that pain and other such experiences are real. It does, however, reduce mental aspects of our lives to the physical events and components of our brains. In the end, it maintains that everything is reducible to, and thus explainable by, the physical.

### [Nonreductive Physicalism](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-80)

A much more common materialist view, at least among Christian materialists, contends that the reductive account also goes too far. They may agree with their fellow materialist that immaterial souls do not exist and that only material substances do, but they reject the idea that everything—namely, the mental—is reducible to the physical. That is to say, on their view there may be only one kind of stuff that accounts for human beings on a basic ontological level, but that doesn’t mean that mental stuff is reducible to brain stuff. This [**nonreductive physicalism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-80) is a form of physicalism, since it holds that, ontologically, human persons are nothing more than living physical organisms. At the same time, however, it does not reduce the mental to physical objects, events, or states. On this view, the mental is something distinct from the physical. Nancey Murphy, one of nonreductive physicalism’s most able defenders, says that when applied “to the specific area of studies of consciousness, it denies the existence of a nonmaterial entity, the mind (or soul) but does not deny the existence of consciousness (a position in philosophy of mind called eliminative materialism) or the significance of conscious states or other mental (note the adjectival form) phenomena.”[**[14]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body13_chapter11.xhtml#note-331) She then adds, “In brief, this is the view that the human nervous system, operating in concert with the rest of the body in its environment, is the seat of consciousness (and also of human spiritual or religious capacities). Consciousness and religious awareness are emergent properties and they have a top-down causal influence on the body.”[**[15]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body13_chapter11.xhtml#note-330)

Several features of Murphy’s description are worthy of comment. First, notice that this view affirms conscious experiences. It does so without reducing the content of conscious experiences, mental content, or mental properties to physical brain states. As often pointed out, this view holds that while there may not be a dualism of substances, there is a dualism of properties. In other words, this view rejects substance dualism but embraces property dualism. Property dualism claims that mental properties are distinct from physical properties and that mental events are distinct from brain events, even if they occur in conjunction with each other. In the philosophical literature, the kind of mental properties we have in view here are often referred to as *qualia*, which is the Latin for “qualities.” In our conscious experiences of things, we experience qualities like sweetness, redness, bitterness, or coldness. Thus there is something that it is like, a mental experience, that we possess in these moments. Property dualism affirms that mental properties and *qualia* are not reducible to physical brain events, but it does so while also maintaining physicalism.

Second, these properties are emergent in that they arise out of the complex neurological system within the brain. Third, once such properties have emerged, they exercise a downward causation on the lower systems of the brain and the rest of the body. This understanding of downward causation, sometimes called top-down causation, is best understood by setting it in contrast to bottom-up causation. As Murphy and Brown explain, bottom-up refers to “the assumption that behavior of an entity is determined by the behavior (or laws governing the behavior) of its parts.”[**[16]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body13_chapter11.xhtml#note-329) By contrast, a downward-causation model suggests that “phenomena at some higher level or organization of a complex system had a downward causal influence on the events that were being studied at a lower level.”[**[17]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body13_chapter11.xhtml#note-328)

### [Functionalism](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-44)

Another very popular view among materialist philosophers is known as [**functionalism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-44). Though functionalism is technically noncommittal about the number of substances involved in a human person, the overwhelming majority of those who hold this view come from the materialist camp. Generally speaking, functionalists think the “number of substances” question is the wrong question. In their view, the better and more important question is, What is a mind? And as their name implies, functionalists define minds as those entities capable of intelligent function, contending that there are any number of entities—humans, computers, machines, and so forth—that might qualify as minds. A helpful illustration of the functionalist conception of minds is the illustration of a hand and a fist. What exactly is a fist? It is a hand that punches. When the hand is balled up into a fist, no new thing comes into existence. Rather, all that happens is that the hand now takes on the function of punching. The same is the case with a brain. When it thinks, no new thing comes into existence. Rather, the brain simply takes on the function of thinking. As already implied, this view of minds raises questions about machines, robots, computers, and much more. Do computers have minds? Are they able to think? While some philosophers believe this is possible, others continue to resist the notion: it is not at all clear that computer processing comes anywhere close to achieving the same kind of thing humans do when we think, reflect, desire, and deliberate.

### [Constitutionalism](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-19)

One final materialist view is worth considering. [**Constitutionalism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-19) is the view that human persons are constituted by their physical bodies even if they are not identical to them. Kevin Corcoran offers an illustration to help clarify the point: “For example, statues are often constituted by a piece of marble, copper, or bronze, but statues are not identical with pieces of marble, copper, or bronze that constitute them. Likewise, dollar bills, diplomas, and dust jackets are often constituted by pieces of paper, but none of those things is identical with the piece of paper that constitutes it.”[**[18]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body13_chapter11.xhtml#note-327)

Like other materialists, constitutionalists reject the idea of there being immaterial substances like souls. On a brute ontological level, there is nothing beyond the physical body that constitutes—or makes up—the person. Yet, interestingly, constitutionalists insist that persons are not the same thing as their bodies. To see this, consider the different ways that a single dollar coin can be instantiated and the kinds of events it can survive. If the coin were thrown into a hot fire and left for a sufficient amount of time, it would eventually melt, and the dollar would be ruined. And as constitutionalists would point out, the metal of the coin would survive in a different form, but the dollar would be lost. The metal that constitutes the dollar is such that it is able to survive the fire, but the dollar constituted by the metal is such that it cannot survive the fire. If the metal and the dollar have different properties—one has the property of being able to survive a fire and the other has the property of not being able to survive the fire—then the metal and the dollar are not the same thing. Similarly, constitutionalists argue against immaterial souls and claim that human persons are constituted by their physical bodies even if they are not the same thing as their bodies.

One additional observation is worth making about constitutionalism: there are two types of constitutionalism, type I and type II. Type-I constitutionalism, maintained by Corcoran, affirms that human persons have to be *constituted by the specific bodies* that they have. In other words, Dew has a particular body, and he must have the body that he has. Likewise, Gould has a particular body, and he must have the body that he has. On type-I constitutionalism, it would not be possible for Dew and Gould to switch bodies. But on type-II materialism, maintained by Lynne Rudder Baker, it is not necessary that we each have the specific bodies that we have. All that is required is that we each *have some body or another*. She says, “I find the traditional thought experiments about bodily transfer—for example the Prince and the Cobbler—utterly convincing when considered from a first-person point of view.”[**[19]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body13_chapter11.xhtml#note-326) So then, while constitutionalists agree that human persons are constituted by their bodies, even if they are not identical to them, they differ over which body is necessary for a person to be thereby constituted.

So what shall we make of materialism in general? On the positive side, materialists have been helpful in forcing us to see the significance of the body as it relates to human persons. Our brains and bodies have much to do with who we are, what we are like, and what we do. Moreover, philosophers over the past several centuries have generally felt that materialism has a significant advantage over dualism in accounting for mind-body interaction. While dualism struggles to explain how it is that an immaterial mind interacts with material bodies, since they never touch and therefore cannot transfer energy one to another, materialism seems to have no such difficulty. Material seems to enjoy a parsimony and elegance of explanation that gives it a significant advantage over dualism. Yet philosophers have also noticed that materialism is not without problems of its own. In particular, while it might have a better explanation of mind-body interaction than does dualism, it seems to have great difficulty accounting for consciousness in general and *qualia* in particular. Thomas Nagel puts the problem rather bluntly: “Consciousness is the most conspicuous obstacle to a comprehensive naturalism that relies only on the resources of physical science. The existence of consciousness seems to imply that the physical description of the universe, in spite of its richness and explanatory power, is only part of the truth, and that the natural order is far less austere than it would be if physics and chemistry accounted for everything.”[**[20]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body13_chapter11.xhtml#note-325) Dualists are well aware of this difficulty and often make use of consciousness to critique materialism and to make arguments in favor of [**substance dualism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-111).

## [Hylomorphism](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-49)

In earlier sections of this chapter we discussed the various categories of views that philosophers put forward regarding human persons. Substance dualists tend to make two distinct claims: (1) for “stuff distinction,” the view that there are two radically distinct kinds of things, or two distinct substances, and (2) for “person-soul identity,” the view that the person is a soul who has a body. By contrast, materialists and physicalists reject the immaterial soul and argue that (1) there is only one substance, which is physical, and that (2) human persons are identical to or are at least constituted by their human body. In this last section, we shall briefly describe one final category put forward by Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, a theory known as [**hylomorphism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-49).

Hylomorphism is sometimes regarded as a version of dualism and sometimes as a version of materialism. In contrast to the substance dualists who argue for two distinct substances, hylomorphists argue that there is but one substance: a human person. In contrast to materialists, however, hylomorphists argue that the one substance (human person) has two distinct causes: material and formal. The word “hylomorphism” comes from two Greek words: *hylē* (matter or, more literally, wood) and *morphē* (form). In the case of the human person, which is a substance, the person is constituted by the material body and the soul, which is the form (life principle or organizing and structuring [**agent**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-1)) of the body.

There are at least two important things to notice about this account. First, it understands the concept of substances as it relates to human persons differently than both substance dualists and materialists. For substance dualists, a human body and a human soul are two distinct substances. Hylomorphists reject that notion and instead argue that there is only one substance: just the human person. For materialists there may be only one substance (the human body), and souls do not exist. Hylomorphists agree that there is only one substance but reject the idea that the substance is just the physical body. On this view, the substance of a human person is composed of both body and soul. Second, and flowing out of the first observation, hylomorphists contend for an ontological unity within the person. In other words, hylomorphists reject the substance dualist’s idea of “person-soul identity” described above, which says that persons *are* their souls and that they *have* bodies. In his discussion regarding human sensation, for example, Aquinas says, “Since, then, sensation is an operation of man, but not proper to him, it is clear that man is not a soul only, but something composed of soul and body.”[**[21]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body13_chapter11.xhtml#note-324) According to hylomorphism, human persons *are both* body and soul essentially.

Philosophers and theologians vary on their opinions of hylomorphism. Those who embrace it think that it allows for a unified understanding of human nature while also affirming the biblical categories of body and soul. Critics, however, are more skeptical about the view being helpful, contending that it collapses back down into either materialism or substance dualism. As with dualism and materialism, the debates continue.[**[22]**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body13_chapter11.xhtml#note-323)

## Conclusion

In this chapter we have offered a survey of various discussions surrounding the philosophical debates about human nature. It began with an overview of the basic terms and concepts involved in the discussion and then summarized a variety of positions. It has been our aim to offer a survey only, leaving our readers to decide for themselves. We shall see some of these issues again in other chapters, and especially in chapter 15 as we take a look at the possibility of life after death. For now, let us simply note that various Christian thinkers have defended materialism, [**substance dualism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-111), and hylomorphism. For our part, we are inclined to think that minds and bodies are distinct kinds of things and that human beings are composed of both. As such, we are inclined to hold some form of either [**substance dualism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-111) or [**hylomorphism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-49).

[**1**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body13_chapter11.xhtml#note-backlink-344) See, e.g., J. P. Moreland and Scott B. Rae, *Body and Soul: Human Nature and the Crisis in Ethics* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000); and Richard Swinburne, *Mind, Brain, and Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[**2**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body13_chapter11.xhtml#note-backlink-343) See David Robb, “Substances,” in *The Routledge Companion to*[***Metaphysics***](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-69), ed. Robin Le Poidevin et al. (New York: Routledge, 2012), 256–64.

[**3**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body13_chapter11.xhtml#note-backlink-342) See René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. Donald A. Cress, 4th ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993). See especially meditation 2.

[**4**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body13_chapter11.xhtml#note-backlink-341) See Aristotle, *De Anima* 11.1, trans. Hugh Lawson-Tancred (New York: Penguin, 1986), 157.

[**5**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body13_chapter11.xhtml#note-backlink-340) Lynne Rudder Baker, *Persons and Bodies: A Constitution View* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 92.

[**6**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body13_chapter11.xhtml#note-backlink-339) Lynne Rudder Baker, “When Does a Person Begin?,” in *Social Philosophy and Policy* 22 (2005): 28.

[**7**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body13_chapter11.xhtml#note-backlink-338) Moreland and Rae, *Body and Soul*, 121.

[**8**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body13_chapter11.xhtml#note-backlink-337) Stewart Goetz, “Substance Dualism,” in *In Search of the Soul: Four Views of the Mind-Body Problem*, ed. Joel B. Green and Stuart L. Palmer (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005), 33.

[**9**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body13_chapter11.xhtml#note-backlink-336) John Searle, *The Mystery of Consciousness* (New York: New York Review of Books, 1997), 136.

[**10**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body13_chapter11.xhtml#note-backlink-335) Searle, *Mystery of Consciousness*, 136.

[**11**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body13_chapter11.xhtml#note-backlink-334) Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia, “Elisabeth to Descartes—10 June 1643,” in *The Correspondence between Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia and René Descartes*, ed. and trans. Lisa Shapiro (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 68.

[**12**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body13_chapter11.xhtml#note-backlink-333) John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), 2.27.10 (emphasis added).

[**13**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body13_chapter11.xhtml#note-backlink-332) Pete Mandik, *This Is Philosophy of Mind: An Introduction* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 140.

[**14**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body13_chapter11.xhtml#note-backlink-331) Nancey Murphy, “Nonreductive Physicalism: Philosophical Issues,” in *Whatever Happened to the Soul?*, ed. Warren S. Brown, Nancey Murphy, and H. Newton Malony (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 130–31.

[**15**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body13_chapter11.xhtml#note-backlink-330) Murphy, “[**Nonreductive Physicalism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-80),” 131.

[**16**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body13_chapter11.xhtml#note-backlink-329) Nancey Murphy and Warren S. Brown, *Did My Neurons Make Me Do It?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 62.

[**17**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body13_chapter11.xhtml#note-backlink-328) Murphy and Brown, *Did My Neurons Make Me Do It?*, 63.

[**18**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body13_chapter11.xhtml#note-backlink-327) Kevin Corcoran, *Rethinking Human Nature* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 65–66.

[**19**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body13_chapter11.xhtml#note-backlink-326) Baker, *Persons and Bodies*, 141. Given that Baker identifies the human person and the being with a [**first-person perspective**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-43), it is not surprising that she finds the Prince and Cobbler thought experiment convincing. Such is certainly consistent with her view.

[**20**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body13_chapter11.xhtml#note-backlink-325) Thomas Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature Is Almost Certainly False* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 35. Notice here that Nagel mentions this problem with specific application toward naturalism. To be clear, naturalism is not exactly the same thing as materialism or physicalism. Materialism and physicalism are generally used synonymously and interchangeably to refer to views suggesting that *only* material or physical objects are included in our ontological discussion. Neither [**materialism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-64) nor physicalism, however, assume a particular view of God. Nevertheless naturalism assumes [**materialism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-64) and physicalism and goes a step farther by rejecting theism and embracing atheism. Yet if consciousness is a problem for naturalism, it is also a problem for [**materialism**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-64) and physicalism.

[**21**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body13_chapter11.xhtml#note-backlink-324) Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Notre Dame, IN: Christian Classics, 1947), 1.75.4.

[**22**](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro02_body13_chapter11.xhtml#note-backlink-323) For those who defend a substance dualist view of human persons, see examples such as John Cooper, *Body, Soul and Life Everlasting* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989); and Moreland and Rae, *Body and Soul*. For examples of those who defend materialism’s compatibility with Christianity, see Trenton Merricks, “How to Live Forever without Saving Your Soul: Physicalism and Immortality,” in *Soul, Body, and Survival: Essays on the*[***Metaphysics***](https://app.wordsearchbible.com/PhilosChrIntro03_back01_glossary.xhtml#glossterm-69)*of Human Persons*, ed. Kevin Corcoran (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 183–200; Peter van Inwagen, “A Materialist Ontology of the Human Person,” in *Persons: Human and Divine*, ed. Peter van Inwagen and Dean Zimmerman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 199–215; and Nancey Murphy, *Bodies and Souls, or Spirited Bodies?* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).