

Quotes

Pierre Cabanis: “The brain secretes thought as the liver secretes bile.”

Karl Vogt: “The brain secretes thought as the stomach secretes gastric juice, the liver bile, and the kidneys urine.”

V.S. Ramachandram: “Even though it is common knowledge, it never ceases to amaze me that all the richness of our mental life – all our feelings, our emotions, our thoughts, our ambitions, our love lives, our religious sentiments and even what each of us regards as his or her own intimate private self – is simply the activities of these little specks of jelly in our heads, in our brains. There is nothing else.” *A Brief History of Consciousness.*

Roderick Chisholm: “The theory would be, then, that I am literally identical with some proper part of this macroscopic body, some intact, nonsuccessive part that has been in this larger body all along. The part is hardly likely to be the Luz bone, of course; more likely, it would be something of a microscopic nature, and presumably something that is located within the brain.” “Is there a Mind-Body Problem?”

Hud Hudson: “Human persons Are most often found somewhere within the lifespan and somewhere beneath the skin of a living human organism. Presumably, then, they are those (spatially and temporally gappy) space time worms that are certain proper temporal parts of the brain and central nervous system of living human organisms.” *A Materialist Metaphysics of the Human Person*

Michael Tye: “On my proposal, then, persons are neither egos nor bundles. They are the subjects of appropriately complex psychological bundles. In actual fact, I claim, these subjects are brains insofar as those brains are in the appropriate physical states.” *Consciousness and Persons.*

Jeff McMahan: “One possibility is that the relation between ourselves and our organisms is the relation of part to whole. This suggestion will seem most cogent if we assume that the mind is entirely reducible to certain regions of the brain. If for example, the mind just *is* those regions of the brain in certain functional states, and if I am this mind, then I am, in effect, this functional brain, which is itself a part of this organism; therefore I am a part of my organism. But even if the mind is not entirely reducible to the brain, it is still something that is generated by the operation of the brain and it a critical component of the systems controlling the functions of the organism. Hence it may be regarded as a part of the organism even if it is not so obviously a part as is an organ such as the brain.” *The Ethics of Killing.*

Ingmar Persson: “In fact, its brain, or even a certain part of the brain seems minimally sufficient for a mind to be realized...The whole organism is not the minimal mind owner...The form of the separability of these subjects from their organisms that I have tried to vindicate is: (S) Predicates of thinking and experiencing are primarily applicable only to the proper parts of our human organisms because these parts are all that is minimally sufficient for their applicability; they are only derivatively applicable to our human organisms in virtue of their having parts.” *The Separability of Persons and Organisms.* *Dialogue*

Robert Puccetti: “How can commissurotomy create two minds or persons if there was just one before?...If we cerebrally intact twin-brained human beings are really compounds of two persons, which is me? Am I the person whose conscious unity is rooted in left brain information-processing and right hand motor control; or am I the person whose consciousness is based in right brain activity and subordinate left hand control? It seems to me that anyone who can get into the intellectual position to ask such a question must recognize he is left brain-based. *British Journal of the Philosophy of Science*

Eric Olson “In fact, it seems likely that the head would behave as a living organism if it were attached to a life-support system. The head would be able to regulate its metabolic rate and wake-sleep cycle. It would retain its muscle tone (even if no consciousness were present). Its pupils would open according to the amount of light hitting the retina and the lens of the eye would focus. And so on...Part of what makes something a living organism, I suggest, is its capacity to coordinate and regulate its metabolic and other vital functions. A living organism may be prevented from carrying out those functions...the instruction that my brainstem sends out to the rest of my organs may not arrive at their intended destinations, or they may not have the effects they are designed to have (“intended” and “designed” by evolution, not consciously.) Nevertheless, the control and coordination mechanisms are intact...consider what would happen if we turned off the artificial life support systems in each case. If we switched off the heart-lung machine that the detached head needs to survive, the head would behave like a dying organism. It would continue to regulate its internal metabolic activities in its characteristic way until the “control centers” shut down owing to lack of oxygen. After a few minutes death, with its characteristic symptoms – lack of coordinated activity, decay and so forth – would occur.” *The Human Animal: Identity without Psychology*

John Locke: “We must consider what *person* stands for: which, I think, is a thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection, and considers it self as it self, the same thinking thing in different times and places.” *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*

“Organisms, Persons and their Parts”

I. Introduction: The Problem of the Thinking Brain

- a. The brain is said to be the organ that produces thought.
- b. If the brain produces thought, then it would seem capable of thought, i.e., a thinker in its own right
- c. A thinking brain within a thinking organism would give rise to a problem of too many thinkers.
- d. One way that the problem can be avoided is if we endorse eliminativism towards brains, heads and other organism parts that would seem to be capable of thought if they existed.

Section II. Organisms Think in Virtue of the Their Brains

- a. Avoiding the extra thinker by analogy with seeing in virtue of our eyes. Our eyes don't literally see.
- b. Failure of the analogy since brains seem literally capable of thought while eyes can't see
- c. Possibility that the brain doesn't think but rather the thinker, i.e. the subject of thought, is the composite of the brain and support system.
- d. The fact that full size organisms in the Hospital Intensive Care Unit aren't part of a larger, partly mechanical thinking subject makes it harder to deny thought to brains dependent upon bodies or vats.

III. Other Undetached Thinking Parts

- a. Even if brains can't think there remains a problem of larger thinking parts – heads, hand complements, upper halves of the body, etc.
- b. It doesn't matter if some of the embedded objects have (partially) fiat boundaries since fiat objects are construed as being, objective, possessing properties etc.

IV. Maximal Thinkers

- a. It doesn't help to stipulate that thinking is maximal: no thinker can be a proper part of another thinker
- b. Claiming thinking is maximal doesn't rule out that the brain thinks and the organism does not.
- c. There's also no reason brains should lose their cognitive powers by becoming a part of something

V. Little People

- a. Another strategy is to deny that the person has a thinking part & to identify the person with the brain.
- b. Reasons to identify persons and brains: the brain is the minimal thinker or consists of the only parts directly involved in thought; unity of thought in two-headed organism; brain transplants place person in a new body; mental states identified with brain states making the brain the subject of thought.

- c. It is not metaphysically harmless to claim that organisms think derivatively what their brains think when the shared thought is true for one but false for the other.
- d. The Epistemic Problem: Unable to know whether one is the organism or the brain
- e The Personhood Problem: Non-persons with all the mental capacities of persons but the wrong persistence conditions.
- e. Pared down, brain-size organisms collapse the distinction of strict and derivative thinkers and pose a problem of spatially coincident thinkers

VI. Noonan's Pronoun Revisionism

- a. Noonan suggests a linguistic solution to mitigate the unwelcome consequences of too many thinkers
- b. Noonan's separation of thinkers of our thought from the referent of "I."
- c. Olson charges that "person" is trivialized if not all thinkers of our thought are persons
- d. Noonan should have appealed to the language of thought and claimed that brains & organisms have different psychological abilities than persons.
- e. Noonan leaves unexplained why the brain or the organism spatially coincident with the person can't refer to itself.
- f. Making thought a brute property only of persons works for simples but not composite thinkers.

VII. Coming to Terms with Being Brainless

- a. Eliminativism and paraphrase of "atoms arranged brainwise" avoids the problem of the thinking brain
- b. The sparse ontology gets some help from van Inwagen's special compositionality question.

VIII. Tu Quoque?

- a. The van Inwagen/Olson sparse ontology is plagued by two thinking conjoined twins sharing only a cerebrum but with distinct brainstems and lower organs.
- b. The sparse ontology still posits less thinkers than its materialistic rivals. It doesn't tolerate embedded or spatially coincident thinkers.
- c. The sparse ontology must accept self-referential failure but still avoids its rivals' violation of supervenience and doesn't make modality as mysterious