

The Realm of Consciousness, part 1

Is there a Ghost in the Mind Machine?

by Nate A. Lindell, created 19 Jan. 2013

A 98-year-old man whom I was friendly with, "Hersch," had a stroke. He forgot things, including replying to my letters. Speaking, writing, walking, which he once did with ease, had to be relearned, and were not performed as well as they once were. Portions of his brain, primarily in his right hemisphere (as is most common with men), were dead: the neurons no longer functioned. Sadly, especially because his entire life before the stroke he was independent and virile, he became depressed, longing for the rest of death.

If a mind is the manifestation of a spirit rather than the product of a physical process, the forenoted stroke raises these questions, at least in my mind:

- did part of Hersch's spirit/soul¹ die with the stroke, or part of his mind?
- if part of Hersch's spirit died, where did it go—heaven, hell, limbo, purgatory?
- how could part of a spirit die?

If the death of part of his brain somehow blocked Hersch's spirit from fully expressing itself, then the spirit is both dependent upon its host brain—the brain being the organ we all must agree hosts (if not produces) our cognitive processes—and interacts with it. But a brain is a physical/material thing, while a spirit is immaterial, a non-thing.

How can nothing interact with, influence, or be influenced by a material thing? With what could a spirit grab, push, pull, blow, sway, excite, incite, or otherwise influence the neural cells in a brain that, along with neural cells in a spinal cord, signal peripheral nerves to operate a body? How could an immaterial spirit influence the neurons in a brain responsible for processing sensations—sight, taste, sound, touch, smell—so that a brain might sense a vision or a message that an immaterial spirit desired it to sense?

A common belief among spiritualists, as revealed in the hilarious movie Ghostbusters and its sequels, is that spirits are a sort of electromagnetic phenomena. But electricity is a material thing, produced by the movement of electrons; it can be detected, as can the magnetic field accompanying it. Light too, another part of the electromagnetic spectrum, is made of material things, photons, which can be detected.

F.N. 1 By spirit or soul, I mean the same thing, in the traditional sense—an invisible, unified, sentient, eternal consciousness/personality.

X-rays, gamma-rays, microwaves, infrared light, and every other type of electromagnetic phenomena are caused by material things, which can be detected. If a spirit is electromagnetic in nature, we would be able to detect them, maybe even see^{them}.

Assuming that spirits are electromagnetic in nature, but outside the spectrum of visible light, spirit detectors would be popular items, more so than metal detectors. Every priest, rabbi, mullah, guru, etc. ought to have one. Wouldn't take long to refine the technology, enabling one to distinguish "good" spirits from "bad" ones, weak ones from strong ones, close ones from far-away ones, etc.

Spirit detectors don't exist because spirits are not electromagnetic in nature.² Spirits are made of nothing, and, as the song says, "Nothing from nothing means nothing."

In our Universe, the only universe we know of (maybe the only universe we can know of—us material beings can sense anti-matter, but not nothing), a thing must either be made of matter or energy. Otherwise it is not an it, but is nothing.

Nothing cannot impact/influence something.

Spiritualists who believe that spirits are immaterial are correct. Yet they err in not believing so in every sense of "immaterial", not believing that spirits truly are nothing. Yes, this means if "God is a spirit" (as the Bible states), then God can't influence our material world in any way. It also means that if we have a spirit, it is the product or manifestation of a physical process, which we know is centered in our brains.

Some might say that God is an idea or **meme** or exists in that realm, which is not material. The problem with that is that all ideas are dependent on a material medium. Ideas in books rely on books and brains to hold and interpret them. The same goes for every method of recording and restoring ideas/memes. The idea of God in a person's mind is dependent on physical structures and processes in that person's brain. An immaterial spirit can not be merely an idea, a thought, nor a concept.

A mind can only be produced by something that exists materially. The question that I hope to answer is how our material bodies (I suspect it's an err to limit our study of the mind to just the brain and the spinal cord) create the impression of a mind in our own minds and in other people's minds.

F.N.2 Most spiritualists believe spirits to be eternal, unique, unchanging, and indestructable. Given that all matter is interchangeable with energy ($E=mc^2$) and that matter, in its solid/stabler and in its electromagnetic state, is always in flux, transforming into light, heat, matter, dividing and spreading throughout the Universe, it'd be a poor source for such a soul. ² of 2