

1 The question here is what is a mind and its relationship to the body. There
2 are two sides to this conundrum. On the one hand is dualism, the notion that our
3 body is one thing and the mind a ghostly thing. On the other hand we have
4 materialism, the notion that our mind is physical and we're just what we appear to
5 be, a material object. I tend to lean towards the dualism side, but both sides have
6 their problems to consider, so I'm really torn between both sides on this question.

7 Crick presents us with the argument for materialism. His main thesis can be
8 summed up by stating that we're nothing but a pack of neurons (Crick, 86).
9 Materialism, put simply, is the claim that the mind is a material thing. Many people
10 take this to mean that the mind is the brain. He has termed this the Astonishing
11 Hypothesis (Crick, 86). He suggests a few reasons why we consider this so
12 astonishing. First we're reluctant to accept the idea "that a complex system can be
13 explained by the behavior of its parts and their interactions with each other" (Crick,
14 86). This is the main method behind the development of modern sciences (Crick,
15 87). Secondly the nature of consciousness hinders our acceptance of this thesis
16 (Crick, 87). For one, if zombies (people whose minds aren't really controlling their
17 bodies) don't need a mind why do we have one? The deep issues of qualia (ie: do we
18 both really see the same color that we call "red"), and that of why a brain can be
19 conscience but not a brick, also hinder our sight of this thesis. Lastly, free will
20 complicates our sight as well (Crick, 88). So in all Crick has demonstrated
21 materialism, but I don't wholly accept these views as they contradict our notion of
22 being more than animals.

23 Clark's short piece on extending minds is worth noting because it is what
24 shows the extreme of the view Crick describes. Clark's thesis is that our minds aren't
25 confined to our brains, and extend to modern technology. He looks at the mind as a
26 processor, and since we use computers to process information and solve problems
27 then he says the mind can be extended into these devices that do more of that for us.
28 This is a mind meant for functioning. These ideas make Crick look more within the
29 spectrum than he initially did. For our purposes here Clark is used as evidence of
30 just why we do naturally think of ourselves as dualists.

31 Descartes holds our only look at the dualism side. His overall thesis is that we
32 are our minds and thus bodies we can do without (Descartes, 82). The mind is all we
33 can be sure of as our senses may be lying to us. Though mind and body are separate
34 they're closely related (Descartes, 82). Senses cross between the two, and nothing
35 impedes our mind's ability to control our body. The body is divisible while the mind
36 is not, yet our mind can have distinct personalities (Descartes, 82). He holds that our
37 bodies, that are nothing but vegetables without our minds, are machines controlled
38 by our minds (Descartes, 83). This is the main argument dualism has against
39 materialism. The strongest argument for this is that of zombies. These views I tend
40 to lean towards, but really my conclusions are mixed.

41 Bloom provides an interesting twist to this question as a whole more than
42 just one side of it. He gets us to question the extent to which we think we may be
43 dualists or materialists but in reality truly be just materialists. Young children, he
44 has tested, seem to treat reality in the materialist sense, but as they get older
45 (acquainted with religion?) they see themselves and other humans as dualists

46 (Bloom 205). Our born nature shows that we don't think of anything as more than
47 what it appears; this leads to materialism. But the growth that we foster in children
48 and the educational institutions enforce leads us all to at least believe in dualism,
49 even if we're truly just materialists.

50 In the end I still lean towards dualism, even though it is worth questioning
51 how something that isn't technically part of the body can control the body. At the
52 same time, though, I do realize that at a tangible level we are nothing more than
53 what is visible as our bodies. So materialism could be accurate, it just makes
54 answering large philosophical and theological questions easier if we can believe in
55 dualism. After all, the primal issue of consciousness does put a crack in the whole
56 materialism way of thinking about ourselves.

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References

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