

## WHOSE PREJUDICE? A RESPONSE TO THE REPLIES OF AUGUSTINE, SMYTHE, AND LARSEN

By James G. Matlock

I thank Keith Augustine, Ingrid Hansen Smythe, and Claus Flodin Larsen for taking the time to reply to my essay review of *MoA*. I would also like to thank John Palmer for making possible this extended discussion of survival issues in the *Journal of Parapsychology*.

Not surprisingly, Augustine, Smythe, Larsen, and I have substantial disagreements. They are committed to a materialist world view and to a physicalism which claims that mental states derive from and are entirely dependent upon brain states, whereas I have become convinced not only that the mind has an existence independent of the body but that it survives the body's demise, persists for a time in a discarnate state, and then rejoins, or, as is commonly put, reincarnates into, a new physical body.

I have not always been as confident of this position as I am now. In 1990, I concluded a review of Ian Stevenson's reincarnation research and criticisms of it with the statement that, although the data then available justified continuing with the research, "it would be rash to declare that reincarnation has been shown to occur." I added, "Until the data and concepts discussed in this chapter can be assimilated to the rest of scientific knowledge, the data, at their best, will remain no more than suggestive of reincarnation" (Matlock, 1990, p. 255). As recently as 2011, I wrote, "although I think that current data point in the direction of reincarnation, we must be cautious in our conclusions, since it may turn out that our present ideas are not quite right and that another solution, which we cannot yet see, is the correct one" (Matlock, 2011, p. 809).

What brought about the change in my views? In part it was going over the research that had been conducted since 1990 and realizing how strong the case for reincarnation had become; in part it was developing a theory of survival and reincarnation that connected to other areas of scientific knowledge. I describe some aspects of my theory in my review. I deal with others in a book coauthored with Erlendur Haraldsson (Haraldsson & Matlock, in press), and I develop my ideas more thoroughly in a work in preparation (Matlock, 2016c). The evolution of my thinking shows what it means to be led by data in forming one's convictions about what our world is like. By contrast, Augustine, Smyth, Larsen, and the other *MoA* contributors appear to be paradigmatic thinkers who interpret data in light of a world view to which they are committed. Evidence that supports their world view is accepted and strengthens it, but evidence that runs counter to it is questioned and set aside.

I do not regard paradigmatic-thinking to be a pejorative label, as Augustine and Smythe seem to have interpreted it. Rather, I use it to indicate a particular cognitive style, different from the cognitive style of data-led thinking. This difference helps to explain why paradigmatic and data-led thinkers can look at the same evidence and come to different conclusions regarding its import. Of course, there are times that paradigmatic thinkers and data-led thinkers are not looking at the same evidence, because the paradigms to which paradigmatic thinkers adhere tell them that certain data are not worth considering, so they do not bother to familiarize themselves with them. Most survival skeptics are at best only superficially acquainted with the evidence for postmortem survival. Data-led thinkers, by contrast, are fascinated by data of all kinds and let the data tell them what to believe and not to believe.<sup>29</sup>

Griffin (1997), from whom I borrowed the paradigmatic-thinking and data-led thinking contrast, suggested that paradigmatic thinkers need to have their paradigms confronted before they will consider data that conflict with them, and that is one reason I began my review with a consideration of two basic assumptions underlying materialism and physicalism on display in *MoA*, the inference from correlation to causation in mind/brain relations and the purported causal closure of the physical domain. I then dealt with the way survival research was handled in Part IV of *MoA*, and I sketched out a theory of survival and rein-

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<sup>29</sup> Paradigmatic thinking should not be interpreted as implying a disregard for data. Paradigmatic thinkers consider data, and at some stage may have been data-led, but they have become solidified in their views, in contrast to true data-led thinkers, who continually test their positions against new information.

carnation to show that there is a way of imagining survival that surmounts many of the objections to substance dualism, the understanding of mind/brain relations that many *MoA* contributors attack and evidently presume to be the only way that postmortem survival can be conceived. I have organized this response around these same four themes in the replies of Augustine, Smythe, and Larsen. Although I do not attempt to respond to all of their points systematically, I believe that I address the main ones.

### **Brain and Mind**

Several *MoA* contributors list ways that mental states are correlated with brain states, from which they infer that brain states bring mental states into being. Augustine and Fishman state, “We now have ample evidence that our mental lives are not merely correlated with brain activity, but positively caused by it” (p. 203). Three responses to this argument are available to survivalists. One is simply that correlation is no indicator of causation; this remains true no matter how vigorously mortalists maintain that correlations reveal a causal arrow running from brain to mind. Another response is that we have reason to think that the causal arrow may run from mind to brain as well as from brain to mind. Emily Kelly considers a range of studies that suggest the mind may impact the body under a variety of conditions (E. W. Kelly, 2007b).

Jeffrey Schwartz (J. M. Schwartz & Begley, 2002; J. M. Schwartz, Gulliford, Stier, & Thienemann, 2005; J. M. Schwartz et al., 2004) has demonstrated that the effort by sufferers of obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) to change their behavior bring about changes in their neural organization, as portrayed in fMRI scans. Beauregard (2007, 2012; J. M. Schwartz, Stapp, & Beauregard, 2004) has documented the ability of people to self-regulate their emotional states. Augustine approvingly cites Clark and Dennett’s (2008) response to Schwartz’s and Beauregard’s work:

But this would lend support to the proposition that minds are non-material—in the strong sense of being beyond the natural order—only if we were to accept the assumption that thoughts, attending and mental activity are not realised in material substance.

For if they are, then all we are seeing is that one set of physical changes can lead to another. Their argument thus assumes that which it sets out to prove. (Clark & Dennett, 2008, p. 22)

Now, is not whether “thought, attending and mental activity are . . . realised in material substance” the question at issue? Clark and Dennett’s argument holds only if we accept that they are. They are producing a tautology based on their preconceptions, rather than confronting the data presented by Schwartz and Beauregard, who draw the opposite conclusions from them.

A similar avoidance of the implications of the data is apparent in Augustine’s admitting the reality of psychophysiological influence, yet steadfastly refusing to believe that it represents the action of an independent mind. He says that my statement, “behavioral changes guided by will can sometimes bring about the neural reorganization” [is] “hardly surprising; what we have in such rehabilitation is little more than an extension of the fact that learning a new fact (consolidating a long-term memory) produces neural changes, only here to a greater degree”(KA, p. 215). True, but Augustine misses the point. What initiated the behavioral changes? It was an OCD patient’s decision and determination to carry the job through.

In his Footnote 9, Augustine proclaims:

. . . because the causation goes in both directions, the stock “correlation is not causation” objection is rather misconceived. For taken to its logical conclusion, it would entail that we cannot know that mental events like willing have physical effects like mitigating one’s OCD, either—we can only know that the two are correlated. But of course no contemporary independence thesis proponent believes this, nor should they. Thus, they should stop leaning on this objection simply to avoid contradicting themselves. (KA, p. 214n11)

This is a curious but revealing comment. Independence thesis supporters appreciate that because

one cannot read causality into correlation, one cannot take correlation as indication of mind-to-brain influence any more than one can take it as indication of brain-to-mind influence. However, independence thesis supporters also recognize that when cerebral changes are preceded by the will to do something, there is a sequence of events that suggests that the brain is changing in response to the willed action. This is very different from inferring, say, that because certain parts of the brain light up when one remembers something, that the brain is causing the memory to arise, or that the memory is reconstituted from a trace stored in the brain. Augustine dismisses the significance of precedence, but it is crucial here.

If mental actions can impact the brain, as J. M. Schwartz's work on OCD and Beauregard's research on emotional self-regulation suggest, or the body, as we see in phenomena as varied as the placebo effect and stigmata (E. W. Kelly, 2007b), then a mind must be able to influence the body to which it is related. It is not clear that Augustine grasps this point. Instead, he deflects attention to survival concerns. He says: "Outside of idiosyncratic parapsychological circles, very few people would be persuaded that the placebo effect, stigmata, or levitating monks—some of the stock of *Irreducible Mind*—has much of anything to do with the reality of life after death or mind-body separation" (KA, p. 209). I suspect that this is true even of people in parapsychological circles. Emily Kelly puts these phenomena forward as examples of psychophysiological influence, not as indicators of life after death.

Because Augustine does not address the real issue here, we don't know whether he denies the reality of the placebo effect, etc., or how he would explain these phenomena in physicalist terms, if he accepts that they occur. In attempting to square his brain/mind identity doctrine with his acknowledgement that causation can work both ways he cites a personal communication from *MoA* contributor Piccinini to the effect that "the issue is not about causation at all; it's about the synchronic metaphysical relation between mind and brain" (KA, p. 214). Just what sort of "metaphysical relation" is involved, Augustine cannot tell us, and it is not at all clear why events that proceed in sequence should be regarded as synchronic, anyway.

A third response to the claim of causal inference from correlations between mental and physical states is that it does not follow from the undoubted influence of ingested substances, brain damage, and so forth, on conscious awareness that the mind as a whole is affected by these things. Our minds include subconscious strata in addition to conscious awareness, and the subconscious allows the mind to carry on even when conscious awareness is impaired or interrupted. That is why we can awake from sleep after a period of being unaware. Augustine calls my appeal to the subconscious an "auxiliary assumption" (KA, p. 216), which it is from his brain/mind identity perspective. I, however, begin with the concept of a complex consciousness, so evoking the subconscious entails the introduction of no new, ad hoc variables.<sup>30</sup>

Augustine discusses Horder's (Chapter. 9) critique of William James' suggestion that instead of producing consciousness, the brain transmits and filters it, like light passing through "colored glass, a prism, or a refracting lens" (James, 1898, p. 14). Horder calls on Lamont, who declares that, "if the brain is a stained-glass window and a beam of white light shines through it . . . then we are the colored light that results, not the white light itself" (Lamont, 1935/1990, p. 104). Why are we not both the white light and the colored light, though? The colored light is a version of who we are, no more than that. Augustine, however, endorses Horder's conclusion that, "even if we assume that the brain is more of a transmissive 'stained-glass window' than a productive 'steaming kettle' for the mind, without a brain, everything must go" (p. 202).

"If one must have a functioning brain in order to even be aware of one's mental functions, then any conceivable disembodied mind that one might posit could have no consciousness," Augustine avers (p. 214). True enough, but is his premise valid? Must one have a functioning brain to be aware of one's mental functions? That is the mortalist's assumption, but it is not the survivalist's assumption, and it is not the

<sup>30</sup> My concept of a complex consciousness comes from F. W. H. Myers (1903), who wrote about a "threshold . . . of consciousness," with a "subliminal" level below and a "supraliminal" level above. Myers understood the subliminal part of consciousness to include "not only those faint stimulations whose very faintness keeps them submerged, but much else that psychology as yet scarcely recognizes; sensations, thoughts, emotions, which may be strong, definite, and independent, but which, by the original constitution of our being, seldom emerge into that *supraliminal* current of consciousness which we habitually identify with *ourselves*" (1903, vol. 1, p. 14; emphasis in original).

conclusion drawn from the evidence by many data-led thinkers. Yes, there have been those who have questioned the degree to which conscious awareness and cognitive processes persist after death (e.g., Broad, 1925; Murphy, 1945), but others have found good evidence that they do in some instances (e.g., Braude, 2003; Carter, 2012; Ducasse, 1961; Gauld, 1982; Griffin, 1997). My view is that most of what makes up our personality, and our individuality, is carried in our subconscious, and that conscious awareness may not be as important when we are disembodied as when we are embodied, but I don't see how the existence of conscious awareness—and deliberative agency—in the discarnate state can be denied altogether. Much of the fragmented personality that comes through in mediumistic messages may be due to difficulties of psi communication between disembodied and embodied mental streams, rather than the absence of a coherent presence in the beyond.

Descartes (1644/2009) famously proposed that the mind—for him, an immaterial thinking substance—interacted with the brain through the pineal gland. That possibility was quickly ruled out, and with its rejection came doubts about his dualistic conception of mind (soul) and body. How is it possible for an immaterial soul to interact with a material body, it is asked? In *MoA*, that question is posed most directly by Kim (Chapter 13). I do not know who first suggested PK as a solution. Probably it was Thouless and Weisner (1947). Others have made the point since, most notably Griffin (1997), who assigns psi a central role in his panexperientialism. In my review, I put forward PK as an answer to Kim's titular question, "What could pair a nonphysical soul to a physical body?" Augustine counters that PK is a "mere placeholder for an explanation" and that "to say that psychokinesis is what allows nonphysical-physical interaction is just to say that nonphysical-physical interaction allows itself" (KA, p. 220). This makes no sense, unless one assumes that a physical basis for PK will ultimately be discovered. To the question, "what could pair a non-physical soul to a physical body?", PK—taken as an ability of mind, not brain—is an obvious and perfectly acceptable answer. If psychokinesis did not exist as a term and concept in this sense, philosophers would need to invent it.

Augustine says, "For such collections [as *MoA*] there is no expectation that any particular author be well versed in the diverse subject matter of other chapters that fall outside of his area of specialization, so why Matlock thinks it is reasonable to expect neuroscientific or philosophical contributors to know the psychological research literature back and forth, or vice versa, is beyond me" (KA, p. 205). This charge is so obviously unfounded, I am not sure that it requires a response. I wonder if Augustine considers any research that is not materialist in design to be psychological research. I do not expect contributors to the first three parts of the book to be acquainted with, much less conversant with, the psychological research literature as such, but I think it is reasonable to ask them to address findings within their fields that conflict with their favored positions. A few contributors do this, although most do not, and it is to this deficiency that I was drawing attention.

Proponents of the dependence thesis are fond of moving from the assertion of brain/mind identity to the claim that they have shown that the mind cannot possibly survive bodily death, and they assume that defenders of the independence thesis hold the converse position, that because mental causation is suggested by some of the data, survival necessarily occurs. This assumption appears again and again in Augustine's comments. It is not a valid assumption, at least not in parapsychology and among survival researchers. Many parapsychologists doubt that the mind survives death, although those who take this stance have not made clear whether they are adopting an epiphenomenal position that understands the mind as emergent from cerebral activity, or if they believe that the mind comes into and goes out of existence along with the physical body. In any event, we may say that the mind's apparent ability to affect its body is consistent with the idea that the mind has an existence independent of the body, but that is as far as we can go. Survival issues have come up in the discussion thus far because Augustine has brought them up, not because the data have led us to them.

### **Quantum Indeterminacy and Causal Openness**

A second major theme of *MoA*, and a prop in its physicalist argument, is causal closure. In my review, I define causal closure as the doctrine that "for every physical effect there is a physical cause" (JM,

p. 195). Augustine objects that this is “a little too strong” (KA, p. 218). He would prefer to define causal closure “as the idea that, for every physical event that has a cause, its cause is physical.” “Otherwise,” he explains, “closure would be immediately falsified by the widely acknowledged occurrence of uncaused physical events that have nothing to do with consciousness, such as the radioactive decay of an atomic nucleus, the spontaneous generation and annihilation of virtual particles within Planck-length time scales, and so on” (KA, p. 218).

Augustine makes a good point here, but his weaker definition of causal closure is not embraced by all of his fellow *MoA* contributors. McCormick (p. 63) says that causal closure means that “all physical events or effects are fixed in a fully physical prior history. The physical realm, as far as we can ascertain, is causally complete.” Kim (1993a, p. 280) has said that the doctrine asserts that, “no physical event has a cause outside the physical domain.” Kim’s definition is consistent with Augustine’s, in that it leaves open the possibility of physical events that have no cause, and merely stipulates that physical events cannot have causes that are not themselves physical.

The stronger form of the causal closure doctrine (espoused by McCormick) is consistent with Newtonian or classical mechanics, which is deterministic. If one knows how a physical process began, one can calculate how it will end. Classical mechanics was once thought to provide a complete description of physical reality. Physicists at the turn of the 19th Century believed they had nothing important left to learn and that the few remaining questions would be resolved within the same deterministic framework. They were wrong. The solutions to the outstanding problems (among them how light behaved) led at the beginning of the 20th Century to the realization that classical mechanics gave only an approximate description of interactions at the macroscopic level and failed utterly when applied to the exceedingly small and tremendously large. Quantum mechanics was developed to describe events below the level of the atom and its rules are very different from the rules of classical mechanics. The behavior of subatomic particles is random and the mathematics of quantum mechanics is probabilistic rather than definitive.

Although quantum mechanics works extremely well in practice, there is no universally accepted understanding of why, or of what it means. Augustine supplies a reading designed to bolster his brain/mind identity assumptions. Even so, he is forced to acknowledge that causal closure in its stronger form is untenable, and he can make the weaker form acceptable only by interpreting a central feature of quantum theory, the observer, as an object, rather than as a human being. To understand how he does this, and what the alternative is, we need to take a closer look at the standard or Copenhagen interpretation of quantum mechanics and its Von Neumann extension.

The Copenhagen interpretation was advanced by Werner Heisenberg and Niels Bohr, two of the founders of quantum mechanics, in the 1920s. From the start, in contrast to Newtonian concepts, quantum theory made room for consciousness. The founders recognized that experimental outcomes could be explained only if the actions of the experimenter (the observer) were taken into account. Because an experimenter’s actions are the results of his or her choices, determined by free will, and are not reducible to neural circuitry, this effectively brings an independent mind into the picture. Building on these Copenhagen principles in his 1934 book, *The Mathematical Foundations of Quantum Mechanics*, Von Neumann showed that all aspects of an experimental set up, including measuring devices and the body of the experimenter himself or herself, were part of the same quantum system. There is no break in the system until one reaches the mind of the experimenter, the only element that lies outside the system, and thus the only element able to have an external influence on the experiment (Stapp, 2011, 2015).<sup>31</sup>

Augustine joins other materialists in rejecting Von Neumann’s conclusion and insists that the mea-

<sup>31</sup> This is a very rough summary of what Von Neumann worked out. Augustine refers to “the Von Neumann-Wigner interpretation” of quantum mechanics, merging Von Neumann’s demonstration with Eugene Wigner’s interpretation of it as consciousness “collapsing the wave function” in a quantum process. Wigner’s description is an oversimplification of Von Neumann’s, but associating Wigner with Von Neumann is sometimes used to try to diminish Von Neumann’s work. My account follows Stapp’s (2015) more conservative presentation of the process Von Neumann described. An observer’s decisions are of central importance, but so is a response from “nature,” which may or may not support the observer’s expectations.

suring device itself could make the “observation” that brings a quantum process to a head. Not only does this position ignore the role of the observer in initiating an experiment, but, because Von Neumann showed that the measuring device is part of the same quantum system as that which is measured, it provides no explanation for how an experiment plays out. It is important to recognize that the theory was never intended to be a general theory of the nature of reality, but only a practical experimental tool (Stapp, 2015). Still, what standard quantum theory suggests is that an independent mind may play a role in the construction of the physical world. Quantum indeterminacy makes room for, if it does not entail, causal openness, and that openness may be exploited by mental action. Moreover, contrary to what Augustine claims, quantum processes could well be involved in the interface of consciousness with the brain (J. M. Schwartz, Stapp, & Beauregard, 2005; Stapp, 2015), and the direct action of the mind on the brain certainly could influence behavior.

Augustine makes a great deal of the supposed absence of “interactive traces,” evidence of interaction between mental activity and the material world that would be expected if physical reality were causally open rather than closed. He refers to Chapters 14, 15, and 16 of *MoA* for support. These chapters (by Wilson, Papineau, and Angel) are devoted to descriptions of physical laws and declarations that “nonphysical souls” would have to violate them if they were to have causal effects on the world. There is no discussion of potential evidence, e.g., from psi research, that the laws are in fact violated under certain conditions, and hence that they may not provide the last word about the structure of nature. Interactive traces are simply declared to be absent, and impossible in principle, because they would violate physical laws. There is a profound circularity to Augustine’s reasoning here, which he appears not to recognize.

The causal openness of quantum indeterminacy has nothing to do with the question of whether the mind survives bodily death, except that unlike the doctrine of causal closure, it does not rule out survival a priori. This is important because, in conjunction with the rejection of the brain/mind identity, it changes the assessment of priors in a Boolean evaluation of the probability of postmortem survival. I do not see how this can be denied, yet in reply to my earlier comments to this effect, Augustine goes on at length about lesser factors he wants to take into account as well. These include parsimony (it is more parsimonious to believe there is no soul than that there is one), the uncertain nature of discarnate interaction, and the supposed incompatibility of survival with physical evolution. I will deal with each of these topics later. At this juncture, I only want to reiterate that because survival cannot be ruled out on the basis of brain/mind identity or causal closure, the antecedent probability of survival is considerably higher than it would otherwise be.<sup>32</sup>

Augustine quotes from his chapter with Fishman, “we will charitably assign equal probabilities of 0.5 to the dependence and independence theses” (p. 260). This is quite charitable indeed, because if all the factors they bring into consideration are weighed as they would like to weigh them, the probability of survival should be near 0. In any event, I was not discussing Augustine and Fishman’s Boolean analysis in my comments, although inasmuch as I introduced the paragraph with reference to it, I see why my remarks were taken that way. All I intended was to make a point about the significant alteration in the posterior probability of survival if brain/mind identity and causal closure do not obtain. I believe that these are the decisive issues bearing on the survival question and with them settled, the probability that something survives is roughly equal to the probability that nothing survives. This sets the stage for consideration of the survival evidence. In my review, I argue that adding the evidence tilts the balance toward survival. Augustine disagrees.

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<sup>32</sup> Augustine asserts that I am confused about what constitutes a background consideration in a Boolean analysis. He says, “neither psychophysiological influences nor violations of closure (i.e., interaction) are prior probability considerations to begin with. Rather, they are facts to be explained” (KA, p. 217). He is interpreting my point too narrowly. I wrote, “If we reject the notions that the brain always acts antecedent to mental events and that the physical realm is causally closed, the calculus changes so that the dependence and independence theses are more equal in their prior probabilities” (JM, p. 200). The assumptions of brain/mind identity and causal closure are background considerations, and if assumptions regarding them are changed (so that the brain/mind identity doctrine is given up and causal openness replaces causal closure), the background estimation changes.

### Assessing the Evidence for Survival

Augustine concedes that *MoA* could have treated the survival evidence more fully. The book has very little on apparitions or trance mediumship, two areas that have contributed large proportions of the relevant data. Apart from Angel's analysis of the Imad Elawar case (Stevenson, 1966), published originally by Angel (1994) and contested by Barros (2004), the handling of reincarnation concentrates on research methodology and does not attempt to come to terms with research findings. Much attention is given to poltergeists and NDEs, which are peripheral to the survival question. Yes, I should have acknowledged that many poltergeist effects have been shown to be fraudulent; nevertheless, the person-centered PK factor is thought by parapsychologists to explain many cases (Roll, 1972, 1977), with survival implicated in only a small number of them (Stevenson, 1972). Some NDE phenomena imply survival (Rivas et al., 2016, pp. 221–237), yet NDEs in and of themselves furnish no direct evidence for it.

The two chapters on mediumship focus on the work of Gary Schwartz and Beischel with mental mediums. In his reply to my comments on his chapter re Schwartz's experiments, Larsen insists that sensory leakage and trickery are more likely explanations for the reported results than some degree of psi, contrary to what Bem (2005) suggested in his review of Schwartz's book (G. E. Schwartz, with Simon, 2002). Larsen expresses surprise that I would call his attention to Bem, "as Bem is pretty harsh on Schwartz's methodology, and deservedly so" (CL, p. 231). Apparently Larsen believes that I am unable to be critical where required. The deficiencies of Schwartz's work are well recognized, and I am not going to defend it. Nor am I going to defend Beischel's work with G. E. Schwartz (Beischel & Schwartz, 2007), discussed in the chapter following Larsen's. The point I was trying to make, but could have been clearer about, is: Yes, sensory leakage could have played a role in these experiments, but even if some of the results might be interpreted as psi acquisitions, they would provide no support for survival. This is the problem with mental mediumship: Even in well-controlled experiments, the procedure makes it impossible to decide between psi and survival as an interpretation of positive results. Beischel herself has acknowledged this drawback (Beischel, 2013, p. 179). By including these chapters but omitting any extended discussion of trance mediumship, some of whose phenomena are much more difficult to explain in terms of either sensory leakage or psi (Braude, 2003; Gauld, 1982), *MoA* avoids confronting the better evidence for survival.

Augustine is absolutely right that

. . . proposing explanations that invoke an unlimited kind of psi raises falsifiability issues that make unlimited psi explanations *ad hoc*, as it seems that any *conceivable* survival evidence could *always* be explained instead in terms of the unlimited psi abilities of living persons. An unlimited psi hypothesis that is compatible with every possible outcome doesn't really explain any particular outcome since it is *guaranteed* that it will not contradict one's observations even before making any. (KA, p. 226; his emphasis)

This is why it would be wise for survival critics to avoid using the concept of unlimited psi of living persons (commonly termed superpsi, after Braude, 1979)<sup>33</sup> as an explanation for the survival evidence. Augustine continues,

The reason that the possibility of unlimited psi makes even limited psi explanations problematic is that whenever limits are put on psi, the objection is invariably raised that we do not know that psi is subject to such limits, and so cannot rule out that a more extensive psi is at play. (KA, p. 226)

There is logic to this argument, and if we are not going to allow the theoretical possibility of an unlimited psi to undermine the evidence for a limited psi, we would do well to define psi and superpsi more carefully. In my review, I suggested that superpsi be considered not as an unusually extensive psi, but as an unusually complex psi. Regular and complex psi may be defined with greater precision. Regular psi, we

<sup>33</sup> Braude's concept of superpsi is an updating of the super-ESP construct introduced by Hart (1959).

may say, “involves the transfer of information between two minds, the acquisition of information by one mind, or the direct action on the physical world or a biological entity by one mind, in a single step,” whereas superpsi “involves the acquisition of information from more than one source or a combination of information transfer, information acquisition, and direct action, in a single step or sequence of steps.”

Defining psi and superpsi in these terms allows us not only to keep the concepts distinct, but to talk more exactly about the role of psi in survival cases. If living agents possess psi abilities, it is a safe bet that deceased agents (if they exist) do too, and a great deal of survival evidence is best explained by psi transfers between the living and the dead. Much of this evidence is susceptible to a living-agent psi interpretation, although some of it requires supposing complex superpsi on the part of the living, as opposed to a simple psi transaction between the living and the dead (Braude, 2003; Gauld, 1982). This is true especially of the reincarnation data, which (as Braude, 2013, repeatedly observes) provide more of a challenge to survival deniers than do the data of mediumship, even trance mediumship. Reincarnation cases include not only information about previous lives, but behavioral and physical correspondences between the persons of the present and past lives, features that are hard to explain in terms of psi acquisitions by the living (Matlock, 1990; Stevenson, 2001).

With reincarnation, we appear to be dealing with memory rather than psi. Augustine, of course, believes that memory is recorded in the brain and is lost when the brain is lost. He quotes Gauld as saying, “Most modern neuroscientists regard memory as totally a function of the brain, a view which if justified . . . is fatal to the possibility that memory and related features of personality might survive death” (Gauld, 2007, p. 295), without noting that Gauld tries to show that this view is not justified. The fact is, neuroscientists have never been able to discover where in the brain memory is stored, despite decades of effort directed at the problem (Braude, 2006; Gauld, 2007). Lashley (1950) spent 30 years trying to locate memory “en-grams,” but he finally gave up, concluding that memory was not recorded in the brain after all. There is no doubt that the brain becomes engaged when things are remembered, and different types of memory activate different parts of the brain (Gauld, 2007), but all that is evidence for is a correlation between memory retrieval and neural activity, not the reconstruction of memory from traces stored in the brain.

The lack of evidence for the trace theory of memory led Pribram (1991) to advance the theory that memory is represented holonomically and distributed throughout the brain, but that proposition has failed to gain widespread acceptance. Given the uncertainty among neuroscientists about whether memory is engraved in the brain, psychical researchers seem to me justified in considering other possibilities, especially inasmuch as their data tell them that memory cannot really be there. A currently fashionable idea is that memory is preserved in a subquantum “Akashic field” (Laszlo, 2007, 2009), from which it is retrieved by psi. However, I stand with those thinkers and workers (e.g., Broad, 1925, 1962; Ducasse, 1961; Myers, 1903) who hold that memory is stored in consciousness, more specifically in the subconscious portion of the mind. I believe that this makes good sense and helps to explain how it is possible to form and retain memories when the mind is not fully engaged with the brain, as during NDEs and reincarnation intermission experiences (Matlock & Giesler-Petersen, in press), and how it is possible for memories to be transferred between lives in reincarnation cases.

Augustine defends the criticisms of Stevenson’s reincarnation research by Ransom and Angel. Ransom’s contribution is a summary of a critique of *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation* (Stevenson, 1966) he prepared for Stevenson when he was working as his research assistant in the early 1970s.<sup>34</sup> Contrary to what I state in my review, it seems that Ransom did accompany Stevenson into the field on three occasions. Ransom’s critique is limited to *Twenty Cases*, so perhaps these trips came later in his employ

<sup>34</sup> Augustine repeats what is stated in *MoA* (p. 571) and I noted in my essay: he had wanted to reproduce in *MoA* Ransom’s full report, along with written comments from Stevenson, but was unable to get permission to do so. Why then did he not have Ransom summarize Stevenson’s comments, to accompany his summary of his critique? In published remarks on the Ransom Report as it was presented by Rogo (1985), Stevenson (1986) stated that he had correspondence in his files that showed that he “encouraged” Ransom to share his critique with others. He only asked “him also to show (with his critique) some comments I had made on [it], and Ransom readily agreed to this reasonable request” (Stevenson, 1986, p. 237). Nevertheless, Ransom has twice since—first for Edwards (1996), and now for *MoA*—publicly shared the substance of his report without saying anything about Stevenson’s comments on it.



with Stevenson. In any event, as I pointed out in my review, Ransom's major criticisms were anticipated by Stevenson in the introductory chapter of *Twenty Cases*, so his report contains nothing sensational or devastating to anyone acquainted with Stevenson's work. *Twenty Cases* was Stevenson's first case collection, and it was based on the early, pioneering phase of his field investigations. Stevenson's methodology and reporting standards improved over time, as he readily acknowledged (Stevenson, 1975, pp. 8–18; 2001, pp. 130–140).

Augustine says, “and of course I included Angel's call for doing what little experimental work could be done for cases of the reincarnation type, namely performing experiments to determine whether the correspondences found between individuals in ‘solved’ cases defy what we would expect to find by chance alone (Angel, 2008)” (KA, p.227). Angel describes his “experimental” approach slightly differently in his 2008 article than he does in *MoA*. In the 2008 publication, he proposes taking 20 sets of “correspondences” between present and previous persons from actual cases, replacing names with initials to form a control group of 20 sets of correspondences, randomizing the resulting pool of 40 sets of correspondences, and presenting the entire pool to judges to see if they can distinguish between the original sets of correspondences and the control sets. If the only difference between the experimental and control sets is the form of the names, this should not be difficult, but whether or not the judges are successful, would the results tell us anything meaningful?

The purpose behind Angel's proposal for what he calls “practical, controlled experimental work” (p. 575) is clearer in *MoA*. He states: “My contention is that Stevenson and others doing so-called empirical research into reincarnation have not even attempted to show that there is anything that needs to be explained here” (p. 578). In order to establish that there is something in need of explanation, Angel suggests comparing sets of correspondences between two people alive at the same time with sets of correspondences between subjects and previous persons in reincarnation cases. The idea appears to have been prompted by a series of 21 correspondences Angel identifies between his life and Stevenson's. Both men were born in Montreal, both received B.A. degrees from McGill, both were married twice, and so on. I suspect that such a test would find a clear distinction between the two groups of correspondences. The correspondences in the control group (the living people) are likely to be of a noticeably more general nature than those in the experimental group (the reincarnation cases). I encourage Angel and Augustine to undertake this test, pitting their hypothesis (they expect there to be no measureable difference, clearly) against mine, and to publish the results. If they are right, and there is nothing to be explained here, the sooner the reincarnation research community recognizes that, the better.

Because *MoA* does not do a good job considering the survival evidence, it cannot claim to have disposed of that evidence. True, I have not substantiated my claim that the evidence tilts the balance toward survival, but neither have Augustine and his colleagues raised serious doubts about it. There is little chance that we can resolve our differences in the present discussion. We can, nonetheless, take up the last of *MoA*'s major themes that I treated in my review: the problem of how to conceive of what might survive death, if something were to do so.

### **Conceiving Postmortem Survival and Reincarnation**

Smythe remarks, “what undermines the idea of reincarnation is not the karma problem but the zero-reason-to-believe-we-have-souls problem. Without a thing that reincarnates, reincarnation's a nonstarter” (IS, p. 243). I agree with her. For there to be reincarnation, something has to have survived death. I too am unconvinced that that something is a soul, or that souls exist, if by soul is meant an immaterial thinking substance on the Cartesian model. It is not clear to me that that is what Smythe intends by “soul,” but it is the definition of soul used—explicitly and implicitly—by many *MoA* contributors. There is the strong presumption among them that substance dualism, or dualistic interactionism in some form, is the only way a mind can relate to a body, so that by critiquing Cartesian dualism, they are defeating survival on a conceptual level. Substance dualism, however, is not the only way of conceiving survival, as I tried to show in my review. There is another possibility, a process alternative, that I believe both meets the major philosophical

objections to substance dualism and receives greater support from the empirical data.

The problem with the Cartesian proposal, as I see it, is not only the lack of direct evidence for an immaterial thinking substance, but that that substance is supposed to be eternally unchanging, to lack extension, and to have no location in space. Additionally, Descartes (1644/2009) held that a soul, or ego, is bestowed by God at conception, and allotted to human beings only, ideas no longer in vogue among non-Christian and even some Christian<sup>35</sup> advocates of substance dualism. The only way I can conceive of a soul is as the subject or center of consciousness, the experiencer of both conscious and subconscious states. I call that the self, rather than the soul, though, in order to avoid confusion with Cartesian concepts.<sup>36</sup> My self is unlike a Cartesian ego in that it does not possess attributes, such as the ability to reason, but is the experiencer of a stream of consciousness, which possesses these attributes. It is this stream of consciousness, comprising both conscious and subconscious levels, that survives death and reincarnates, I contend.

As Augustine notes, C. D. Broad understood the mind to be a compound of two factors, a psychic factor<sup>37</sup> and a bodily factor, neither of which “separately has the characteristic properties of a mind” (Broad, 1925, p. 535), but which together create one. Augustine takes this to mean that “our mental lives could not survive death because the ‘compound’ of the two things that give rise to minds would cease to exist with the death of one of its parts, the brain” (KA, p. 217). This is only one possible scenario envisioned by Broad (1925). In another scenario, he permitted the psychic factor to outlast bodily death, although he distinguished between its persistence and its survival. Personality fragments might persist, but survival requires that the psychic factor have an associated mental stream (Broad, 1925, p. 539). In 1925, he believed that the case data pointed to persistence rather than survival, but by the end of his career (Broad, 1958/1976, 1962), he recognized that in some cases there was evidence for a more robust survival associated with what he then called the  $\psi$ -component of the mind.

Although Augustine claims that a psychic factor cannot survive death in the sentence quoted above, elsewhere he draws attention to commentators (e.g., Murphy, 1945) who, like Broad (1925), have thought that the evidence suggests that if something continues on after death, it is a mere persistence of fragmentary personality traits, without an associated mental stream. There is no doubt that many mediumistic and apparition cases suggest persistence more than they do personal survival, but I am not sure that means what these commentators take it to mean. As I observed above, the apparent fragmentation may be a function of psi communication between the living and the dead. Alternatively, or in conjunction, it could be that there is a fuller survival of function at the subconscious level. Importantly, either possibility—persistence as defined by Broad or persistence as the surface reflection of a deeper flow of experience—is logically compatible with reincarnation. In regards to persistence and reincarnation, Broad wrote, “instead of a single mind which animates a successive series of organisms we should have a single psychic factor which combines with such a series of organisms to form a successive series of minds” (1925, p. 551). If that is so, if even fragmentary psychic factors may reincarnate, we cannot rightly deny that persistence would constitute a limited survival.

Broad was of the opinion that if a  $\psi$ -component belonged to a quasiphysical astral body, “it would be easier to grant that it might have a stream of personal experience associated with it, and that this might be continuous with the deceased person’s *ante-mortem* stream of experience.” That is because “the ‘astral body’ might be supposed to play much the same part in the way of supplying actual organic sensation,

<sup>35</sup> Swinburne (1986), for instance, grants that God bestows souls on nonhuman as well as human animals.

<sup>36</sup> Myers (1903) wrote about a “subliminal Self” that was not in conflict with the self as consciously experienced, but rather continuous with it and encompassing it. “I conceive that there may be,—not only *co-operations* between these quasi-independent trains of thought,—but also upheavals and alternations of personality of many kinds, so that what was once below the surface may for a time, or permanently, rise above it. And I conceive also that no Self of which we can here have cognizance is in reality more than a fragment of a larger Self, —revealed in a fashion at once shifting and limited through an organism not so framed as to afford its full manifestation” (Myers, 1903, vol. 1, p. 15; emphasis in original). In defining the self as the experiencer of both conscious and subconscious states, I mean by the term what Myers designated the subliminal Self.

<sup>37</sup> Augustine writes about Broad’s “psi factor,” but Broad (1925) called it the “psychic factor.” Later, Broad (1958/1976, 1962) referred to it as the  $\psi$ -component of the mind.

actual *quasi*-sensory perception of external things, and so on, as did the physical body during its lifetime” (Broad, 1962, p. 425; emphasis in original). The astral body idea faces serious hurdles, though, both conceptual and evidentiary. I concur with Augustine about these, and I agree with him that the astral body does no more than reframe the mind-body problem. However, I do not accept that the only alternative to an astral body is a “nonphysical soul” in the Cartesian mold. A surviving stream of consciousness, or a stream of personal experience, is not a soul in the Cartesian sense, and its relation to the body need not be conceived in terms of substance dualism or interactionism.

In my review, I draw on Whitehead’s (1929/1978) process metaphysics to explain how a discarnate stream of consciousness might continue into the afterlife, unsupported by an astral body. Whitehead supplies a detailed, psychologically-sophisticated account of conscious experience, and although he himself did not believe that streams of experience remained active after death, there is no reason other than a commitment to physicalism to discard the possibility. Augustine’s response to my proposal is: “Sure, if you amend [Whitehead’s model] so that it no longer entails [the implication of mortality], then it becomes at least compatible with personal survival. But that is surely true of any metaphysics if one amends it enough” (KA, p. 224). He adds: “And while Alfred North Whitehead’s views entail mortalism, mortalism itself does not require that his process metaphysics be correct, again making its relevance doubtful” (KA, p. 224). I am not sure what point Augustine is trying to make here. Whitehead’s position assumes physicalism (and hence mortalism), but I cannot see that it entails it, or why its status vis-à-vis physicalism should affect its value for my speculations about survival. For an extension of Whitehead’s metaphysics similar to mine, see Weiss (2012, 2015).

The philosophical advantage to treating the mind as a stream of consciousness, or stream of experience, extends beyond the possibility of considering the mind in process rather than substance terms. It relieves us of the need to introduce a new construct (a soul), and so disposes of the parsimony issue. Nevertheless, we should not forget Broad’s conception of mind as a compound of a psychic factor and a physical factor. It might be wise to restrict the meaning of “mind” to this compound, and refer to the part of a mind which survives as a psychic factor,  $\psi$ -component, or mental stream, rather than as a mind. Broad (1925) uncharacteristically introduced confusion in equating a mind with a surviving psychic factor that had an associated stream of consciousness. It is obvious that a disembodied mental stream of any sort would be different from an embodied mental stream, if for no other reason than that it would no longer come under the sway of a brain.

Embodied and disembodied mental streams would differ, but if they are continuous, how different would they be? Our disembodied mental streams would no longer be impacted by our diets, by our levels of stress or fatigue, by injuries to our heads, and so forth, but would the fundamental nature of our cognition have to change, would our cognitive abilities be altered or disappear altogether? They might be altered, but I see no reason to think that they would vanish (cf. Stokes, 1997, 2007, 2014). Stapp (1999) has argued that attention, intention, and will are properties of consciousness, and that they play key roles in quantum mechanics. If, as I have suggested, memories are registered in the subconscious, the ability to record and retrieve them would belong to a mental stream as well. Many other capacities and qualities, such as emotion, could be added to the list. The expression of all of them is mediated by physiological and neurological processes while we are embodied, but that does not mean that they are not available to us while disembodied. Also, without our bodies, we would lack eyes, ears, and so on, to receive information through perception and other sensory means; we would be unable to communicate with each other through speech; and we would lack physical means of acting on the world. However, a discarnate mental stream could compensate for these losses with psi.

I cannot take the space to illustrate these various capacities with case examples (for which see, e.g., Almeder, 1992; Braude, 2003; Carter, 2012; Ducasse, 1961; Gauld, 1982; Hart, 1959). By no means all cases of mediumship and apparitions suggest survival in the limited form of persistence, and for those which do suggest persistence as opposed to a more robust survival of consciousness, we must, as I have noted, consider the possibility that the limitations reflect the nature of psi-based interaction, or that substantially more activity is underway at the subconscious level than is manifested in the conscious awareness

of the deceased and communicated to the living. Myers' (1903) documentation of a permeable threshold between subliminal and supraliminal levels of mind strongly supports this latter possibility, and it has welcome theoretical implications. An unbroken stream of experience at a subconscious level would provide the continuity called for in Whitehead's (1929/1978) metaphysical scheme, and it would furnish the sort of container for fragmentary psychic items that Broad (1962) and other commentators have expected an astral body to supply.

Augustine says, "if conscious awareness requires interaction with the brain (as Matlock seems to imply), then the death of the brain makes impossible any sort of conscious existence after death" (KA, p. 216). He proceeds to draw from Broad (1925) the possibility that a psychic factor without an affiliated stream of consciousness might be reactivated upon its re-affiliation with a new brain after reincarnation,<sup>38</sup> and he makes this equivalent to the subconscious regaining conscious awareness when reunited with a brain. Thus, he concludes, I am being inconsistent with my "belief" in intermission memories with veridical perceptions of the material world, which Giesler-Petersen and I (Matlock & Giesler-Petersen, in press) found reported in all stages of intermission experiences. But I never said or implied that conscious awareness requires interaction with a brain. I believe that the structure of consciousness is the same in death as in life, and that conscious awareness certainly is possible in the absence of embodiment. The inconsistency is imagined by Augustine, who has read into my words something I never said, or intended to say.

Augustine has misunderstood me also in relation to the localization issue. Descartes (1644/2009) claimed that the soul has no extension and is not localized in space. Augustine quotes me as saying, "there would be fewer logical difficulties for a surviving mind that was localized in space (and time)" than there are for a Cartesian soul, but he interprets this as my support for the astral body concept, notwithstanding my clear rejection of that concept ("I do not think that a consciousness stream requires the support of an astral body. . . ."; JM, p. 201).<sup>39</sup> Augustine goes on to give reasons for doubting the existence of astral bodies and tries to use these reasons to undercut what he presumes to be my argument. But I was not referring to localization via an astral body. I was thinking of reports of phenomena such as veridical perceptions during intermission experiences and NDEs (Matlock & Giesler-Petersen, in press; Rivas et al., 2016) that suggest the localized presence of a disembodied mental stream.<sup>40</sup>

Augustine believes that "discarnate perception, cognition, and emotion suggest an implausible break in our evolutionary continuity with other animals" (KA, p. 217). He quotes from his chapter with Fishman: "The independence thesis flies in the face of our understanding of the evolutionary origin and development of animal minds (p. 213)." Elsewhere in his reply, he asks: "What bearing might the evolution of the brain on the mental capacities of different species of animals have on the likelihood that human minds perish at death?" (KA, p. 208). Why is Augustine so adamant that survival is in conflict with evolution? I think it is because of the Cartesian assumptions that the soul is eternally unchanging and that God granted souls only to humans, not other animals. Another *MoA* contributor, Bradley, is explicit about this connection: "The intellectual stress-test on substance dualism becomes even more severe when we seek plausible, well-reasoned answers to questions about the evolutionary origins of minds or souls" (p. 304). It is not clear, though, why Augustine feels the need to hammer at the problem in his reply to my review. I explicitly distanced myself from all forms of dualism, and my process theory of survival specifically addresses evolution.

<sup>38</sup> Augustine actually says "after possession, reincarnation, or resurrection" (KA, p. 216) and cites Broad (1925, p. 536), but Broad does not mention either possession or resurrection.

<sup>39</sup> Later on, Augustine acknowledges that I do not support the astral body concept, but his comment suggests that he may not understand my process theory of survival: "I concur with Matlock that a stream of consciousness doesn't necessarily need an astral body to sustain it, but only because it's logically possible that one's memories and personality traits could somehow be implanted/uploaded in a new biological brain before the old one dies—a minimalist kind a reincarnation in which there is no discarnate existence between incarnations" (KA, pp. 222–223n21).

<sup>40</sup> Other examples are: attempts to touch living people during intermission experiences and NDEs that are felt as physical contacts by those people; so-called reciprocal apparitions, in which an agent feels himself to travel to a distant location, and is there seen as an apparition by a percipient; deathbed visions in which dying people see deceased loved ones coming to meet them; and direct-voice mediumship, in which the disembodied voice of a communicator appears to emanate from the air near the medium.

Central to my attempt to show how the survival of consciousness is related to evolution are idealism and panpsychism. Augustine charges that I am wrong to state that “idealism is a form of monism diametrically opposed to materialism” (JM, p. 200). He maintains that idealism is the philosophical position that “only mental objects exist” (KA, p. 222), and its proper antithesis is realism. “For realism affirms what idealism denies, namely that physical objects exist” (KA, p. 224n23). He is using idealism in the restricted sense of Bishop Berkeley, whereas I mean idealism in the broader sense that the reality we know is fundamentally mental ontologically; it is not that only mental objects exist, but that the mental is the ground of all that exists. Idealism in this broader sense places the mental at the origin and center of everything, including the material world, and thus is opposed to materialism, which derives the mental from the physical (Marshall, *BP*, p. 388). This version of idealism may sound only slightly less extreme than Augustine’s, but I and many other researchers and theorists (e.g., Barušs & Mossbridge, 2016; E. F. Kelly, 2007, *BP*, Chapter 14; Marshall, *BP*, Chapter 11; Tucker, 2013) are turning to it partly because of its compatibility with quantum theory. As Marshall (*BP*, p. 390) points out, Whitehead’s metaphysics can be understood as idealist in the broader sense, although Whitehead was unhappy with the state of idealist thinking in his day (Whitehead, 1929/1978, p. 116).

Closely allied with this broader understanding of idealism is panpsychism. Again, there are different versions of panpsychism, but all affirm that “mind is a general phenomenon in nature” and that “all things have mind or mind-like quality” (Skrbina, 2005, p. 2). Most contemporary panpsychists refer to “experience,” rather than to “mind.” Chalmers (1996, pp. 293–299) equates consciousness with experience and experience with information management, allowing not only humans, mice, and slugs, but thermostats, stones, and electrons to have experiences. Whitehead (1929/1978) and Griffin (1997, 1998), on the other hand, distinguish between aggregates of low-level entities, each of which has experiences but which collectively have none, and hierarchically composed entities, which have collective experiences through their dominant members. Thus, each of the molecules that comprise a rock has experience, but the rock as a whole does not, whereas entities from atoms and molecules up to organic individuals such as ourselves share a collective experience. The latter type of panpsychism is often termed panexperientialism. Panexperientialism is, I think, the most reasonable sort of panpsychism. I link experience to consciousness, though not to mind (adopting Broad’s definition of mind as a compound of psychic and physical factors). If consciousness is at the root of everything, then it is logical that it would be a constituent part of everything, yet I would not want to say that inanimate objects have experiences, even granting that their experiences were of a very different nature than ours (Chalmers, 1996). Similar positions to mine are taken by many of the same workers who have embraced idealism (Barušs & Mossbridge, 2017; E. F. Kelly, 2007, *BP*, Chapter 14; Marshall, *BP*).

An idealist panpsychism or panexperientialism has important implications for the mind/body problem, survival, and reincarnation. In the first place, it means that mind and body are not composed of different substances. Mind and body are different, yes, but the basis of the difference is what I called in my review an idealist property dualism, not a substance dualism. This removes the essential philosophical obstacle to their interaction (the problem of how an immaterial soul can interact with a material body). The interaction could be effected through psi (Griffin, 1997). One might say, through PK, but from the idealist perspective, PK is a type of telepathy: “Because matter reduces to mind, ‘mind-over-matter’ is effectively ‘mind-over-mind,’ and so psychokinesis is *telepathic action*” (Marshall, *BP*, p. 399; emphasis in original). Internal psychokinesis or telepathic action may well go on all the time without us realizing it, and, as I pointed out in the review, it may have a central place in the reincarnation process. An incoming mental stream might influence its new body to produce congenital physical signs such as birthmarks and lay down neural pathways in its brain to allow for the reproduction of skills and other learned behaviors. Once associated with a new body, the mental stream would join with physical traits to form a new compound mind. New bodies and new minds are what make us different people in each life, despite having inherited our mental streams from our previous lives.

Given the wide diversity of animate and inanimate matter in the universe today, it seems clear that consciousness has been evolving and differentiating since the universe’s beginning, and it stands to reason

that it would have evolved and differentiated in relationship to the entities of which it was a part. The evolution of physical form and the evolution of consciousness must have proceeded in tandem (E. F. Kelly, *BP*, pp. 514–515). The emergence of biological life and death would have brought with it the appearance of a new type of consciousness, a consciousness distinct from the living matter which was its host. Thus, I imagine, were born streams of consciousness, one of whose novel characteristics was the ability to animate one body after another. Reincarnation, I believe, has continued ever since, in an increasingly complex succession of life forms. I doubt that humans are the only animals whose mental streams return in successive bodies. Where there is death, there is survival and reincarnation of a mental stream, I am suggesting. As animals' brains became more complex, consciousness also became more complex in order to work with them, leading to the development at some stage of what Myers (1903) called the supraliminal mind (conscious awareness). Before that, what we now consider the subliminal or subconscious mind would have existed on its own, and it naturally would have undergone its own long evolution.

Smythe calls my speculation about these matters a fiction. She is right again. Like all philosophical or theoretical reflections of this order, it is a story designed to pick up where empirical evidence leaves off. My purpose in sharing it in my review, and reiterating it here, is to provide answers from the perspective of a process metaphysics to questions on which substance dualism is often said to founder (e.g., by Bradley, cited above). My story explains the origins of consciousness, of streams of consciousness, and of reincarnation; it suggests that consciousness has evolved in relation to the entities with which it is associated; and it claims that humans are not the only animals whose mental streams pass from one body to another over successive lives. How true my story is, we may never know, but I believe it furnishes a cohesive narrative that is amenable to testing by logic, if not by experiment.

Augustine says: “Traditional Cartesian dualism is the natural starting point for any consideration of *how* one might survive death without technological or miraculous intervention . . . . The question is how far beyond objections to it one need go in considering obstacles to personal survival. Not very far, I would argue” (KA, p. 222, his emphasis). Indeed, the only alternative he recognizes to substance dualism, which envisions wholly disembodied survival, is survival in an astral body. Thus,

If these two possible ways of dualistically surviving death—as either an entirely nonphysical soul, or else as an entirely physical astral body—exhaust the possibilities, then there is nothing more to cover. And if they do not exhaust them because a primarily nonphysical mind might also have a few physical properties and survive death, then at least some of the objections to astral body views will transfer over to this non-Cartesian form of interactionist substance dualism. (KA, pp. 222–223)

Substance dualism and astral bodies may exhaust the possibilities of “dualistically surviving death,” but dualism is not the only way to conceive of mind/brain relations and survival. The process approach I have outlined has clear philosophical advantages over substance dualism. Arguably, it enjoys greater empirical support too, which gives it a theoretical advantage. Augustine evidently did not understand what I was proposing, so he did not address it in his reply, other than calling idealism (which he characterizes in a different way than I do) an “extreme” position and asking of panpsychism, “Why bring it up at all?” (KA, p. 223). I take responsibility for not having made my argument clearer in my review. I hope I have done a better job this time around.

### **The State of Play**

Augustine asserts, “Matlock displays a tendency to misrepresent others' views in order to create the appearance that they support his own” (KA, p. 223). He has this backwards: He is the one who portrays the positions of others as in line with his brain/mind identity notions, when in fact they depart from it radically. Augustine says: “[Matlock] misleadingly attributes to Noë (2009) the view that ‘conscious awareness emerges outside the brain, in response to environmental stimuli.’ But this is not what Noë's embodied/situated cognition approach maintains” (KA, p. 223). Yet in *Out of our Heads: Why You are not Your Brain*,

and *Other Lessons from the Biology of Consciousness*, Noë (2009) says things such as:

In this book, I advance this truly astonishing hypothesis: to understand consciousness in humans and animals, we must look not inward, into the recesses of our insides; rather, we need to look at the ways in which each of us, as a whole animal, carries out the processes of living in and in response to the world around us. The subject of experience is not a bit of your body. You are not your brain. The brain, rather, is part of what you are. (Noë, 2009, p. 7)

Consciousness isn't something that happens inside us: it is something that we do, actively, in our dynamic interaction with the world around us. The brain—that particular bodily organ—is certainly critical to understanding how we work. I would not wish to deny that. But if we want to understand how the brain contributes to consciousness, we need to look at the larger nonbrain environment in which we find ourselves. (Noë, 2009, p. 24)

I could easily multiply the quotations from Noë (2009), but these should suffice. Augustine writes: “Matlock similarly ascribes to Chalmers, Strawson, and Koch ‘panpsychist positions that *recognize that awareness is not grounded in cerebral activity*’ (emphasis mine). But nothing could be further from the truth. Each of their respective positions actually *entail* that awareness *is* grounded in brain activity” (KA, p. 223). Consider, then, the following, first from Chalmers:

If there is experience associated with thermostats, there is probably experience *everywhere*: wherever there is causal interaction, there is information, and wherever there is information, there is experience. One can find information states in a rock—when it expands and contracts, for example—or even in the different states of an electron. So if the unrestricted double-aspect principle is correct, there will be experience associated with a rock or an electron. (Chalmers, 1996, p. 297, italics in original)

If thermostats, rocks, and electrons have brains, presumably they are metaphorical ones. The same observation applies to Strawson:

I persist in thinking that “physicalism,” “real physicalism” is a good name for my position in the current state of debate, but it's already time to admit that my understanding of real physicalism doesn't even rule out panpsychism—which I take to be the view that the existence of every concrete thing involves experiential being even it also involves non-experiential being. (Strawson, 2006, p. 8)

Like Chalmers, Koch (2012) connects consciousness to experience to information, without tying consciousness to a brain:

By postulating that consciousness is a fundamental feature of the universe, rather than emerging out of simpler elements, integrated information theory is an elaborate version of *panpsychism*. The hypothesis that all matter is sentient to some degree is terribly appealing for its elegance, simplicity, and logical coherence. Once you assume that consciousness is real and ontologically distinct from its physical substrate, then it is a simple step to conclude that the entire cosmos is suffused with sentience. (Koch, 2012, p. 132; emphasis in original)

Augustine is not alone in wanting to portray his brain/mind identity stance as more unanimously held than it is. In my review of *MoA*, I pointed out Angel's attempt to bring Pythagoras and Plato into line with his own thinking. Under the heading of “Evidence that Physical Formulas are Not Violated”—in other words, causal closure is maintained—Angel says that “Pythagoras and Plato seem to have been rationalists who believed in the importance of mathematics” (p. 381). Augustine says:

Matlock chides Angel for (accurately) describing Plato and Pythagoras as “rationalists,” which Matlock mistakenly takes to mean “materialists.” What Angel in fact meant was that Plato and Pythagoras are part of the same intellectual tradition that characterizes the rationalist epistemology of the late modern philosophers Descartes, Leibniz, and Spinoza, who believed that only reason, without the aid of experience, supplies genuine knowledge. (KA, p. 221n18)

If that is what Angel meant, he is confusing the Enlightenment rationalism of Descartes, Leibniz, and Spinoza, which referred to logical thought as opposed to empirical observation, with contemporary rationalism, which is a code for materialism and skepticism of phenomena considered paranormal by mainstream science. There is irony in making Descartes out to be a rationalist in the latter sense, given the strenuous opposition to his substance dualism in *MoA*. Beyond this, although Pythagoras and Plato might be placed in the same lineage as the Enlightenment rationalists, it should be recognized that Pythagoras was partly an empiricist who believed in the possibility of recalling previous lives. Moreover, neither Pythagoras nor Plato can comfortably be grouped with Aristotle, as Angel does in his next sentence: “Plato’s student, Aristotle, subtly developed an early synthesis of rationalism and observational empiricism” (p. 381). Angel then introduces Newton as the culmination of a supposed unbroken intellectual tradition.

Augustine charges that I represent “a lone voice in the wilderness” (KA, p. 223) in my promotion of idealism and panpsychism in relation to postmortem survival. He is very wrong about that. My ideas are not much different from the ideas of many others engaged in contemporary survival theory. Griffin (1997), Tucker (2013), Woollacott (2015), and Barušs and Mossbridge (2017), along with E. F. Kelly (2007, *BP*, Chapter 14), Marshall (*BP*, Chapter 11), Weiss (2012, *BP*, Chapter 13) and other authors in *BP* embrace idealism and/or panpsychism and allow for postmortem survival and reincarnation. Griffin (1997), E. F. Kelly (2007), and Weiss (2012, *BP*, Chapter 13) draw on Whitehead’s process metaphysics in addition. Survival theory is giving up dualism for idealism and panpsychism,<sup>41</sup> but this trend is missed by Augustine et al. When I said that *MoA* has a “dated feel from the research point of view” (JM, p. 191), it is this, more than the several reprinted selections, that I had in mind.

When the movement away from brain/mind identity in psychology, biology, neuroscience, and philosophy is brought together with an increasing receptivity to postmortem survival and reincarnation, it becomes clear that the materialist world view represented by *MoA* is under sustained assault. As I have shown, survival cannot be ruled out on logical grounds, and according to Stapp (2009), it cannot be ruled out on scientific grounds, either.

Strong doubts about personality survival based solely on the belief that postmortem survival is incompatible with the laws of physics are unfounded. Rational science-based opinion on this question must be based on the content and quality of the empirical data, not on a presumed incompatibility of such phenomena with our contemporary understanding of the workings of nature. (Stapp, 2009, p. 16)

Stapp (*BP*, p. 181) has said that even reincarnation can be accommodated by quantum mechanics, with only minor adjustments to the mathematical formalisms. The main obstacle to the acceptance of the survival and reincarnation data is neither logical nor scientific. It emanates from adherence to the reigning paradigms of materialism and physicalism, which are buttressed by commitment to received opinion rather than evidence. We will have to wait to see which side wins the battle, which we can expect to be prolonged and hard-fought. The progressive forces are slowly gaining ground, however, and I have little doubt that they will prevail in the end.

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<sup>41</sup> This is the emerging and growing consensus view, but there are hold-outs, especially among philosophers, e.g. Almeder (2012) and Rivas (2012). Rivas’s paper (in Dutch), whose title may be translated as *The Self and the Reality of Mind*, is not yet available in English (T. Rivas, personal communication, December 6, 2016).