

A CRITIQUE OF JOHN SEARLE'S MATERIALISTIC PANACEA TO THE MIND-BODY PROBLEM.¹

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ABSTRACT. John Searle is one of the scholars whose contribution to the mind-body discourse displays a corpulent intellectual gulf but which has yet to receive deserving critical attention. Searle is convinced that there are four features of the mental phenomena: Consciousness, Intentionality, Subjectivity of Mental States and the Problem of Mental Causation. And all of these, for him are nothing but activities of the human brain. This perspective leaves much to be desired as it fails to incorporate some realities that albeit, exhibit the four features of mental phenomena but do not have direct link to the human brain, as Searle premised. It is in this connection that the mystical realities of reincarnation, telepathy and astral projection are brought parallel with Searle's seemingly valid solution to the mind-body problem. This essay therefore posits contra Searle that the mind-body problem may not receive adequate and satisfactory solution from a strictly materialistic perspective.

KEY WORDS: John Searle, Mind-Body Problem, Telepathy, Reincarnation, Astral Projection.

Introduction

“My leg hurts!” “There must be something going on in your mind.” “I am experiencing a serious ache in my head.” These utterances are not uncommon among peoples during social interactions. It is also true that there are many other such expressions that are not limited to these. These statements have one similarity – ‘mineness’. This is to say that there is a possessive attribute present in each of them. In the case of the leg, something is laying ownership to it (compare the utterance to “My pen is lost”) as

¹ Hitherto, we sided with John Searle's analysis and submission over the debate of mind-body, until our dear friend Ofuasia Emmanuel came along. Not only did he play a colossal role of reviewer for the initial draft of this essay but provided critical posers and alternatives toward its improvement. We thank him immensely.

though it is 'owned' in the sense of the word. This something could be a human or nonhuman animal even though the latter cannot be said scientifically to utter words as humans do, telepathy has informed us of this possibility. The second utterance informs that the mind is the seat of thought where critical reflection is borne. Hence, statements like "use your mind" are usually prevalent even when the speaker could have said "use your brain". The third statement expresses discomfort in a part of a body which according to the proposition is 'owned' by the speaker. At this juncture, the crucial question arises: "what do we mean when we say "I"?" Sadly, this question has bothered sages, nobles, teachers, scholars, clergies, and persons on the street for thousands of years but is, in our opinion, yet to receive a satisfactory answer. This essay does not claim to have that answer. The claim of this essay however, is that scholars who claim to have answered the question cannot incorporate some realities into their schema without problems. The essay focuses on John Searle. Some of the schemas that may not be incorporated into their seemingly decisive solutions would be limited to three here. These are: telepathy, astral projection and reincarnation. Now, someone may object that there is no scientific basis for each of the three. Yes, this objection is not incorrect. That correction is however, based on the supposed idea that every answer should be scientific and empirically verifiable. This lends credence to the erroneous idea that any non-scientific knowledge is sophistry and illusion. This is in line with the philosopher David Hume who had instructed:

When we run over libraries, persuaded of these principles, what havoc must we make? If we take in our hand any volume; of divinity or school metaphysics, for instance; let us ask, Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number? No. Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence? No. Commit it then to the flames: For it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion.²

Now, knowledge has proven over the years not to be static. The Newtonian mechanics which had explained reality was based on the Euclidean geometry which on its own right is only limited to three dimensional speculations. Until an Albert Einstein was bold enough to show that Euclidean geometry cannot account for four dimensional realities and scientific works had construed geometry as an expression of the eternal

² David Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 135.

truths about our universe when it had not all along, revealed the whole truth about our universe. In this connection, Fritjof Capra harps:

The gate of Plato's Academy in Athens is said to have borne the inscription, 'You are not allowed to enter here, unless you know geometry.' The Greeks believed that their mathematical theorems were expressions of eternal and exact truths about the real world, and that geometrical shapes were manifestations of absolute beauty. Geometry was considered to be the perfect combination of logic and beauty and was thus believed to be of divine origin.³

Similarly, epistemology, one of the branches of philosophy was revolutionized by Edmund Gettier in the middle of the 20th century when he questioned the account of knowledge handed down by Plato earlier considered as authoritative. The bottom line is that there are many areas of human endeavor that science cannot (at least for the moment) handle competently. Realities such as telepathy, astral projection and reincarnation are some. That one has not experienced them is unnecessary and insufficient to say that those who have are concocting myths and sorcery into books. Some of the persons who have had such experiences and put them into writing are: Iyke Nathan Uzorma (Ph.D), Lobsang Rampa and Shirley MacLaine. These persons claim that mind is distinct from the body as this is demonstrable. How can we disprove their claims if we do not attempt to experience their 'experience'? This goes against the Searlean notion that what we call mind is a function of the human brain. Given this conflict, what makes up the human person? If we have a mind that can exist independently of the body, how come there are children and idiots whom we have to teach many things? What is the role of consciousness in the human make? Can we neglect the unconscious even if it tells us more about us?

The attempt to explore these difficulties would henceforth be this work's concern. The work has five divisions, the first being this introduction. The second section makes a brief summary or overview of the scholarly contributions to the mind-body problem before dealing with John Searle, in the third part. The fourth section is a corollary to the third as it, in a detailed manner, addresses the difficulties in the supposed solutions provided by Searle by exploring the lived-experiences of Iyke Nathan Uzorma (Ph.D),

³ Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics: An Exploration of the Parallels between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism*. (Colorado, Shambhala Publications Inc., 1975), 158.

Lobsang Rampa and Shirley MacLaine. The aim of this section is to show that whereas consciousness, intentionality, subjectivity of mental states and mental causation are entrenched in each of these mystical experiences, they do not point to the human brain as their source. The fifth divide concludes this intellectual exercise.

The Mind-Body Problem as a Perennial Metaphysical Issue in the History of Philosophy

Commencing the mind-body problem with Rene Descartes is not to say that Descartes is the first to delve into the discourse. It had been hinted earlier that the problem had always been with man. Perhaps it must have been out of curiosity and wonder – the quest to know everything about everything. Ancient black Egyptians have pondered over the question and their answer could be one of the themes resonating throughout *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*. The ancient Greeks, the Romans, the Arabs, and many civilizations have looked at this ‘mystery’. So, to say that discourse originates with Descartes is to say the opposite of the truth. We think that one of the reasons why a discourse on the mind-body dilemma cannot escape Rene Descartes is because he was one of the very few that gave brilliant answers to the question without a recourse to religion as a starting point.

The French man Rene Descartes is a thorough philosopher, as we perceive the philosophic spirit in his attempt to get to the root of the mind-body problem. This philosophic spirit has been described by W. Dilthey that it “leaves no valuations and aspirations unexamined and no piece of knowledge isolated; it seeks the grounds for the validity of whatever is valid.”⁴ This is what Rene Descartes attempted during his time and made his contribution to the mind-body problem truly different.

It is Rene Descartes’ conviction, having applied the ‘methodic doubt’ and arrived at the ‘ergo sum’ that there are two realities: mind and body. He makes a demarcation between both of them by revealing that while the former is private, the latter is public. In other words, by this Rene Descartes mean to say that the activities of the human mind are private while the body’s activities are open to observation. In this connection, Anthony Kenny summarises the Cartesian enterprise as follows:

Indeed, his main ideas can be so concisely expressed that they could be written on the back of a postcard; and yet they were so

⁴ Rickman, H.P (ed.). *Dilthey: Selected Writings*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 129.

revolutionary that they changed the course of philosophy for centuries.

If you wanted to put Descartes' main ideas on the back of a postcard you would need just two sentences: man is a thinking mind; matter is extension in motion. Everything, in Descartes' system, is to be explained in terms of this dualism of mind and matter. Indeed, we owe to Descartes that we think of mind and matter as the two great, mutually exclusive and mutually exhaustive, divisions of the universe we inhabit.⁵

In the Cartesian sense, a human being is a thinking substance and it is this notion that informs his analysis of the body as a material substance and the mind as an immaterial substance. Thomas Hobbes however is among the earliest critique of Rene Descartes who had provocatively cited Descartes's mental 'immaterial substance' as a paradigm contradiction in terms. In other words, Hobbes sees the words 'immaterial' and 'substance' not to be sensible enough in describing the mental as Rene Descartes had done. Descartes recognizes that the whole essence of man is to think. In our present life, the mind is intimately united with the body, but it is not our bodies that make us what really are. It is the mind. It is the mind that 'causes' the body. Hence, there is a causal connection between them. The implication in this mode of thought is that the mind is capable of independent existence and in the moment of the death, it is the body that perishes, but the mind does not.

This model has been dealt serious blows from the English scholar John Locke in his *Essay on Human Understanding* and his criticisms are still much relevant when we come to latter part of this work that would deal with re-incarnation.

Rene Descartes faces the ultimate question of how these distinct 'personalities' relate. Put otherwise, Rene Descartes has difficulty informing us of where the mind and the body interact. How can the non-physical relate with the physical and still maintain a single identity? Is it the case that when we say 'I', it is the mind that is actually using the body to utter such propositions (such as those used to commence this work)? Do animals have minds in the same way that humans do? Can their minds also live before and after their unities with their bodies? Is it true that when we say "...My leg...!" it is

⁵ Anthony Kenny, *An Illustrated Brief History of Western Philosophy*. (New York: Blackwell Publishing Co. Ltd, 2006), 208.

the mind that is actually laying ownership to the body? If a Cartesian is willing to affirm this question, then what do we mean when we say “...My God...”? If we are willing to grant the existence of a God, do we own that God in the same way we lay ownership to our body? These questions are very tricky and it would require much care examining them. Nevertheless, the Cartesian answer to the question: what do we mean when we say ‘I’? is as follows:

I do not now admit anything, which is not necessarily true: to speak accurately I am not more than a thing, which thinks that is to say a mind or a soul or an understanding, or a reason, which are terms whose significance was formerly unknown to me. I am, however, a real thing and really exist, but what thing? I have answered a thing, which thinks.⁶

Where is the connection between the mind and the body? How can a mental process such as willing, thinking, influence spatial corollaries such as movement? Rene Descartes informs us that the point of connection between the mind and the body is the pineal gland. Is the pineal gland a non-material substance or a material substance? The pineal gland is located in an area of the human brain and this evinces it as a material substance. The logical implication in the Cartesian answer is this: the place of interaction between the material substance and the immaterial substance is in a part of the material substance. This is far from an answer in the logical domain but in the fields of mysticism, it could be plausible.

Attempts to improve upon the ideas of Rene Descartes have caused scholars such as Benedict Spinoza, Gottfried Leibniz, Nicolas Malebranche, and Maurice Marleau Ponty et al. It has birthed theories such as occassionalism, epiphenomenalism, psycho-physical parallelism etc. The common denominator in the view of these scholars is dualism. Even before they laced their boots, they started with the assumption that mind and body are distinct entities and a reconciliation has been evasive but this is about to change.

Re-Thinking a Panacea to the Mind-Body Problem a La John Searle

In his 1984 work, *Minds, Brain and Science*, John Searle gives us a thorough materialistic resolution to the mind-body problem. His view is very similar with that of Gilbert Ryle

⁶ G.N.A. Vesey. (ed.). *Body and Mind*. (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1964), 24.

but he does not concern himself with Rene Descartes directly as Gilbert Ryle had done. He recognizes that contemporaneously the mind-body discourse has evolved into the relation between the mind and the brain. John Searle is convinced that:

I believe that the mind-body problem has a rather simple solution, one that is consistent both with what we know about neurophysiology and with our commonsense conception of the nature of mental states – pains, beliefs, desires and so on.⁷

He holds that the problem we had all along had was the way this aspect of philosophy has been handed down to us and the vocabulary inherent therein. He reveals in his own words that:

I believe that the mind-body problem has a rather simple solution, one that is consistent both with what we know about neurophysiology and with our commonsense conception of the nature of mental states – pains, beliefs, desires and so on.⁸

Searle is convinced that there are four features of the mental phenomena. They are: consciousness, intentionality, subjectivity of mental states and the problem of mental causation. Consciousness for John Searle is “central fact of specifically human existence because without it, all of the other specifically human aspects of our existence – language, love, humour and so on would be impossible.”⁹ He defines intentionality as the “feature by which our mental states are directed at, or about, or refer to, or are of objects and state of affairs in the world other than themselves.”¹⁰ Subjectivity as holds by John Searle has to do with personalism or has Rene Descartes calls it ‘ergo’. Mental causation has to do with our belief that our thoughts and cogitations have some measures of causal effects on the physical world. These four put together are impossible to be admitted in our scientific framework according to John Searle. These four features for John Searle are what made answers to the mind-body problem so elusive. In his proposed solution to the mind-body problem, John Searle advances that:

Mental phenomena, all mental phenomena whether conscious or unconscious, visual or auditory, pains, tickles, itches, thoughts,

⁷ John Searle. *Minds, Brains and Science*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 12.

⁸ John Searle. *Minds, Brains and Science*, 12.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

indeed, all of our mental life, are caused by processes going on in the brain.¹¹

John Searle describes the structure of the human mental life as a connection of neurons to the brain. He hints, “our sensations of pains are caused by a series of events that begin at free nerve endings and end in the thalamus and in other regions of the brain.”¹²

It is when the brain begins to process these that the mental aspect becomes evidential. This implies, on the other hand that “if the events outside the central nervous system occurred, but nothing happened in the brain, there would be no mental events.”¹³

At this point, one comes to a crucial point in the analysis of John Searle on the mind-body solution. He claims that all what Rene Descartes are mental activities and private are merely brain processes. This means that the Cartesian division between the mental and the observable is erroneous. It also denies the possibility of an immortal soul that can outlive the body. But wait a minute! John Searle has made two statements that do not seem go hand in hand. In his arguments to evince the solution to the mind-body problem these two statements would need a marriage:

Brain processes cause all mental phenomena.

All mental phenomena such as pain, thoughts etc are just features of the brain. The above (i) and (ii) do not appear to be so easy to merge. For how can it be conceived that brains cause mind and yet minds are just features of the brain? John Searle believes that it is the impossibility to see a merger to both propositions that has blocked a solution to the mind-body problem all along. In his resolution, John Searle uses the analogy of the formation of some material substances. He expounds:

In the case of liquidity, solidity, and transparency, we have no difficulty at all in supposing that the surface features are caused by the behaviour of elements at the micro-level, and at the same time, we accept that the surface phenomena just are features of the very systems in question. I think the clearest way of stating this point is to say that the surface feature is both caused by the behaviour of microelements, and at the same time is realised in the system that is made up of the micro-elements. There is a cause and effect relationship, but at the same time the surface features are

¹¹ Ibid., 16.

¹² Ibid., 16-7.

¹³ Ibid., 17.

just higher level features of the very system whose behaviour at the micro-level causes those features.¹⁴

Now, when he returns to the brain-mind problem (otherwise construed as mind-body problem), Searle informs us that the four features of mental phenomena mentioned earlier are actually the causes of mental activities as well as the features in association with the brain and the entire nervous system. With this, he claims to have given a satisfactory answer to the mind-body problem. He states: “To summarise: on my view, the mind and the body interact, but they are not two different things, since mental phenomena just are features of the brain.”¹⁵

The resolution given by John Searle is commendable. He has succeeded in eradicating the problem of causation that has plagued the Cartesian framework. It is also the case that these scholars have put logic and language into revealing the problem of the debate. Just as Rene Descartes’ analysis surpassed those of his contemporaries, the Searlean structure as well can be commended for its illumination that is suggestive of not too new claims on the subject matter. The paper shall therefore employ the Gettier approach by pointing out some lived scenarios to justify the thesis of this study that a materialistic solution compounds the problem further.

Telepathy, Astral Projection and Re-incarnation: Aspects of Mental Phenomena Void of the Human Brain

Critics would be wont quickly to attack this kind of objection to the Searlean schema. They could say that these are not scientific truths. For now, we shall sustain their objection until a latter part of this work. Without much ado, we shall proceed to exposing claims of some mystics in each of the aforementioned realities that point to the existence of a non-material entity that is capable of consciousness, intentionality, subjectivity and mental causation. We commence with telepathy.

Simply put, telepathy is “communication, apparently without the use of sight, sound etc. between the minds of different persons.”¹⁶ These ‘little’ definition is however incomplete. Telepathy could also involve communication between humans and

¹⁴ Ibid., 19.

¹⁵ Ibid., 24.

¹⁶ Bernard Cayne. (ed). *The New Webster’s Dictionary of the English Language*. (New York: Lexicon Publishing Co., 1992), 1016.

nonhuman animals as well. The Buddhist mystic Tuesday Lobsang Rampa demonstrates this reality in his 1978 work, *As It Was!* He gives this scenario:

At the sight of me the frontier guards set great mastiffs loose and they came snarling and slavering at me, but then, to the amazement of the guards, they jumped at me with affection because they and I recognized each other as friends. Those dogs had never been talked to telepathically before and I suppose they thought I was one of them. Anyway, they jumped all around me and welcomed me with wild yelps and barks of joy.¹⁷

Elsewhere, the mystic writes that “animals are not just stupid creatures who can’t talk and can’t do anything. Actually, humans are the dumb clucks because animals can do and do talk by telepathy. Humans for the most part have to make uncouth sounds which they term a language, whereas animal can do telepathy in any language!”¹⁸

It is the case that the experience of telepathy between the dogs and the mystic did not follow the normal brain processes of both humans and dogs, especially great mastiffs that are ferocious. There was consciousness in the interaction because the dogs “recognized” the mystic. The intentionality was there because they sought themselves as friends but not as strangers or enemies as the frontier, guards had thought. The idea of subjectivity of mental state cannot be dismissed as the dogs had their will and volition intact. They rushed at the mystic at first. Snarling and slavering only for them to become affection because they were talked to telepathically. The notion of mental causation is present as well. This is because it was being talked to telepathically that caused the dogs to be affectionate with the mystic.

This connection between dogs and humans show that there is more to existence other than taking a materialistic approach to solving the mind-body problem. Telepathy can also occur among human beings. In spite of displaying the four mental features that are for Searle characteristic of the brain, it is the case that telepathy does not need the brain to function. The fact that people can also travel to distant places and discuss with one another in the astral plane without their brains and bodies poses another blow to Searle’s position. What then is Astral Projection?

¹⁷ Lobsang T. Rampa. *As it Was!* (London: Transworld Publishers 1978), 96-7.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 12

In a simple way, astral projection is that human ability to move away or out of one's body. Of course, what moves out of the body cannot be the body but what Rene Descartes and philosophers before him as far back as Socrates, Pythagoras and Plato had called the human soul. This supports the thesis that there is a non-material entity capable of independent existence from the human body. Shirley Maclaine, Iyke Nathan Uzorma and Lobsang Rampa have all experienced astral projection and we shall make a very brief exposition of their experiences.

In her 1983 book, *Out on a Limb*, Shirley Maclaine describes her astral experience thus:

I stared at the flickering candle. My head felt light. I physically felt a kind of tunnel open in my mind...I felt myself flow into the space, fill it, and float off, rising out of my body until I began to soar. I was aware that my body remained in the water. I looked down and saw it...¹⁹

The above excerpt shows, above other things a personal experience of a human with flesh and blood. The "it" in the excerpt is her body. She demonstrates that there is something more than the physical human body, contra what John Searle would have us understand. In his own first astral experience, which occurred in November 1971, Nigerian author Iyke Nathan Uzorma harps:

In that experience, I had something like electric shock all over my body while I was still awake on the bed. Immediately after this shock, I found myself standing outside my body. Thereafter, I began to run inside a big tunnel filled with darkness. This was astral projection in its first stage.²⁰

There is a common denominator between the experiences of these persons. Both testify to the reality of a non-physical element and both of them talked about a tunnel, although both had dissimilar starting points. This thought has been also corroborated by the experience of Lobsang Rampa when he writes "you will experience a sensation that you are going through a tunnel toward a light at the far end of the tunnel. You will be drifted upwards like a piece of thistle-down on an evening breeze."²¹ Now, the fact that these mystics may not have met before and tell their stories shows that there is an aorta of truth no matter how little and just because their experiences cannot be

¹⁹ Shirley MacLaine. MacLaine Shirley. *Out on a Limb*. (New York: Bantam Books, 1983), 327.

²⁰ Iyke N. Uzorma. *Occult Grandmaster Now in Christ*. (Warri: Harbinger Christian Publishers, 2007), 71

²¹ Lobsang T. Rampa. *Twilight*. 1980, 65.

incorporate into the scientific schema does not make them the opposite of the truth in all entirety.

Again, the point is made clear. The four features of mental phenomena are all present in astral projection. However, if these mystics leave their physical bodies which contains their brains, definitely, the thesis of Searle has been defeated. Nevertheless, we are far from over with rejoinders for Searle. The reality of reincarnation further diminishes the chances of any solution emanating from Searle on the mind-body problem.

It would be prudent to state exactly what reincarnation is first. In the words of Helen Labeodan: "Reincarnation is the passage of the soul from one body to another."²² Elsewhere we are told that "reincarnation happens if and when one and the same person returns to life in a body that is numerically distinct from the body she had (or was) when she died."²³ Let us concern with some mystics who claim to have had this experience.

Tuesday Lobsang Rampa whom we had mentioned before now, was a lama whose soul inhabited the body of a British plumber named Cyril Henry Hoskin (1910-1981) who writes with that name (T. Lobsang Rampa) and recounts events that had occurred many years back as a lama in Tibet and China. However, it should be hinted that reincarnation has been a subject of concern even among the ancients. For instance, the ancient philosopher Pythagoras is said to have hinted at his re-incarnation in the following tradition handed down to us:

They say that, while staying at Argos, he saw a shield from the spoils of Troy nailed up, and burst into tears. When the Argives asked him the reason for his emotion, he said that he himself had borne that shield in Troy when he was Euphorbus; they did not believe him, and judged him to be mad, but he said he would find a true sign that this was the case; for on the inside of the shield was written in archaic lettering EUPHORBUS' S. Because of the

²² Helen Labeodan. "Death is not the End: A Review of the Concept of Immortality among the Yoruba." *Kinaadmamn: An Interdisciplinary Research Journal*, Vol. 19. No. 20. 2008, 6.

²³ Michael J. Murray, Michael C. Rea. *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 274.

extraordinary nature of the claim, they all urged him to take down the offering; and the inscription was found on it.²⁴

There are many other such reports that are not limited to the ancients alone. Many cultures even in Africa such as the *Yorùbá* people have testified to this reality and implied the existence of a non-physical entity that can outlive the human body. In the words of Helen Labeodan:

The belief in reincarnation...among the Yoruba portrays clearly their belief that the soul of man does not die because it can exist independently outside of the body. They believe evidently that there is an element of immortality in man and that there is a life after death.²⁵

Anyone could object that these are not true or that they are just myths concocted against the reality of death. This is a very good skepticism. The *Yorùbá*, however, makes incisions on the skin of the deceased baby, who when coming back to life as 'another' baby brings those markings on the skin at the places where the earlier incisions were made. Such children are called 'abiku' and they are clear cut cases of the reality of a human soul or mind which is independent of the body. Perhaps to make the case against Searle more glaring, the researches of Paul Edwards and Ian Stevenson suggestive cases of reincarnation may be deployed.

First, it should be hinted that "there are well-known cases in which hypnotic regression in adults has uncovered apparently suppressed memories of past lives."²⁶ One of the most famous such cases involved a woman named Virginia Tighe who, in the early 1950s, underwent several sessions of hypnotic regression during which she seemed to recollect details of a past life as a woman named Bridey Murphy in nineteenth-century Ireland. Part of what made the case impressive was the amount of detail in her memories that seemed as if it could not have come from other sources. Summarizing the case, Paul Edwards writes:

Bernstein [the hypnotist] as well as the others attending the sessions found several of the features of Bridey's responses overwhelmingly convincing. Her Irish brogue [which was present only under hypnosis] seemed entirely genuine. She constantly

²⁴ John Barnes. *The Presocratic Philosophers*. (London: Routledge, 1979), 110.

²⁵ Helen Labeodan. "Death is not the End", 7.

²⁶ Michael J. Murray, Michael C. Rea. *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*, 276.

used strange Irish words and she seemed to possess a wealth of information about nineteenth-century Ireland. One episode which was particularly impressive to them concerned the “Morning Jig,” an Irish dance mentioned by Virginia during one of the sessions. Bernstein gave her a posthypnotic suggestion to dance the jig after coming out of her trance. When Virginia came back, after some urging on Bernstein’s part, she suddenly “became vibrantly alive” and “her feet were flying in a cute little dance.” Then she looked dazed and unaware of what she had done. The episode was doubly impressive because Virginia was known to be a poor dancer. She was also not given to reading books and, according to Bernstein’s account, there is no evidence that she had ever engaged in the study of Irish history and customs.²⁷

While the attendant awe in the foregoing case of reincarnation is striking, there is a fairly large body of research by psychiatrist Ian Stevenson, documenting a variety of cases in which children seem to be remembering – on their own and without the aid of anything like hypnosis – details of past lives. We shall consider the striking and representative case of Samuel Helander. According to Ian Stevenson:

Samuel Helander was born in Helsinki, Finland, on April 15, 1976. When he was two years old, he began to make some statements and recognitions that suggested he was remembering the life of his mother’s younger brother, Pertti Haikio...Samuel was only about a year and a half old when, upon being asked his name, he said that it was “Pelti.” (At that time and for some time later, he could not pronounce the “r” sound of “Pertti.”) Attempts to convince Samuel that his name was “Samuel” generally failed; he insisted that it was “Pelti” and later “Pertti” . . . On looking at [a photograph of Pertti] Samuel remarked that he remembered how a dog had bitten him on the leg. A dog had bitten Pertti on the leg when he was a child of three, but Samuel had never been bitten by a dog and had never been told about Pertti’s having been bitten. Nor did the photograph give any clue suggesting that he had been

²⁷ Paul Edwards. *Reincarnation: A Critical Examination*. (New York: Prometheus Books, 2002), 60-1

bitten. On another occasion Samuel noticed a photograph of Pertti as a young child using a walker. He said that the photograph was of himself and that he had been in the hospital with his legs in plaster. [The photo] showed Pertti using a walker . . . but nothing in the photograph suggested that his legs had been in plaster, as they had been just before the photograph was taken. Pertti's legs had both been fractured in an accident when he was about four years old. When Samuel made his remark about this, he was himself between three and four years old. When Samuel saw a photograph of Pentti Haikio, Pertti's father, he said: "This is my father" . . . Samuel also identified several objects that had belonged to Pertti: a guitar, a velvet cordouroy jacket, and an old watch...When Samuel was taken to the cemetery where Pertti had been buried, he looked at Pertti's grave and said: "This is my grave."²⁸

It is clear from the above showing that there are realities that contain the four features of mental phenomena illustrated by Searle but that are contra Searle, not founded in the human brain. Is it the case that the brains of the dead were wired into the living in the two instances? Obviously, that could not be the case. Much as we ponder over this instance, it is clear that Searle's strict materialistic position has shortcomings.

It is the case that Searle's framework cannot capture the experiences of the mystics and those who have experienced instances of reincarnation. Whereas these realities show that there is more to life and consciousness as Searle would want us to believe, it reinstates the thesis that there are several realities that a materialistic position cannot adopt.

Conclusion

We have argued in the preceding paragraphs that the experiences of mystics cannot be accommodated in Searle's features of mental life, which find root in the brain. There could be objections that these testimonies are myths or that they do not encompass the realm of logic and reason. The point however is that not everything that humans know

²⁸ Ian Stevenson. *Children Who Remember Past Lives*. (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2001), 73-5 .

are in line with logic. This has been succinctly put by Fritjof Capra who looked at the parallels between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism in the following words:

Zen Buddhists have a particular knack for making a virtue out of the inconsistencies arising from verbal communication, and with the koan system they have developed a unique way of transmitting their teachings completely non-verbally. Koans are carefully devised nonsensical riddles which are meant to make the student of Zen realize the limitations of logic and reasoning in the most dramatic way. The irrational wording and paradoxical content of these riddles makes it impossible to solve them by thinking. They are designed precisely to stop the thought process and thus to make the student ready for the nonverbal experience of reality.²⁹

It is a corollary of the above that Sir Karl Popper's writes:

I realize that such myths may be developed, and become testable; that historically speaking all – or very nearly all – scientific theories originate from myths and that a myth may contain important anticipations of scientific theories. Examples are Empedocles' theory of evolution by trial and error or Parmenides' myth of the unchanging block universe, in which nothing ever happens and which if we add another dimension becomes Einstein's block universe...³⁰

Again, for those who are bent on downplaying the essence and reality of telepathy, astral projection and reincarnation, Lobsang Rampa (or we may say Cyril Henry Hoskin) tells us in his 'Foreword' in *As It Was!* that:

All my books ARE true, and I have maintained that in the face of relentless persecution and calumny. But throughout the ages sane, sensible people have been persecuted and even tortured for telling it As it Was!³¹

The thesis of the essay has been to show that there is a non-material entity that is also responsible for the four features of mental life. Whereas Searle portends the brain as the springboard of these features, we have shown that his thesis is the opposite of the

²⁹ Fritjof Capra. *The Tao of Physics*, 117.

³⁰ Karl R. Popper. *Conjectures and Refutations*. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), 36.

³¹ Lobsang T. Rampa. Lobsang. *As it Was!* 9.

truth when we consider the experience of the mystics. It is the case that there is an entity that is over and beyond the human brain. This entity is neither a cause nor a feature of the brain but independent. Balke and Logthetis are in consonance with this paper as they claim “if the term ‘I’ refers to anything at all, it does not refer simply to the body; after all, most of us feel individuated as a self within the body.”³² Thus, Searle’s solution to the mind body-problem is not a satisfactory resolution given its incompatibility with not only the experiences mentioned here but others such as Clairvoyance, Psycho-Kinesis, and even Near Death Experience.

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³² R. Balke, N.K. Logothetis. “Visual Competition”. *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*. 3 (2002), 19.

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