Locke's Argument on Possibility of Material Mind

Ben Chen

Dept of Computer Science and Engineering,
Southern University of Science and Technology

June 4, 2024

Human beings think, but do they think because thinking is a power of their **material** body, or because there is an **immaterial** thinking part of them? [**locke-1700**]

若有所思

Human beings think, but do they think
because thinking is a power of their **material**
body, or because there is an **immaterial**
thinking part of them? [**locke-1700**]

▶ We don't know which is the case.

若有所思

Human beings think, but do they think because thinking is a power of their **material** body, or because there is an **immaterial** thinking part of them? [**locke-1700**]

▶ We don't know which is the case.
▶ But Locke argues that the material mind is possible.

> *It being, in respect of our notions, not much more remote from our comprehension to conceive, that God can, if he pleases, superadd to matter a faculty of thinking, than that he should superadd to it another substance with a faculty of thinking [...] since we know not wherein thinking consists, nor to what sort of substances the Almighty has been pleased to give that power.*
>
> — *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*

Argument for the possible material mind

1. God is perfect and omnipotent. ϕ
2. If God is omnipotent, then he could superadd a faculty of thinking to matter, whatever the form of thinking is. $\phi \rightarrow \psi$
3. Therefore, it is possible for matter to think. ψ [Modus Ponens]

Locke's argument on possibility of Material Mind

It being, in respect of our notions, not much more remote from our comprehension to conceive, that God can, if he pleases, superadd to matter a faculty of thinking, than that he should superadd to it another substance with a faculty of thinking [...] since we know not wherein thinking consists, nor to what sort of substances the Almighty has been pleased to give that power.

– An Essay Concerning Human Understanding

Argument for the possible material mind

2. If God is omnipotent, then he could superadd a faculty of thinking to matter, whatever the form of thinking is. $\phi \rightarrow \psi$

Can the superaddition be possible?
How is the superaddition done?

Stillingfleet against the Material Mind

And here again you say, That the Power of Thinking joined to Matter, makes it a Spiritual Substance. But as to your Argument from God s Omnipotency, I answer, That this comes to the same Debate we had with the Papists about the Possibility of Transubstantiation. For, they never imagin'd, that a Body could be present after the manner of a Spirit in an ordinary way, but that by God's Omnipotent Power it might be made so: but our Answer to them was, That God doth not change the Essential Properties of things while the things themselves remain in their own Nature: And that it was as repugnant for a Body to be after the manner of a Spirit, as for a Body and Spirit to be the same. The same we say in this Case. We do not set bounds to God's Omnipotency: For he may if he please, change a Body into an Immaterial Substance; **but we say, that while he continues the Essential Properties of Things, it is as impossible for Matter to think, as for a Body by Transubstantiation to be present after the manner of a Spirit;** *and we are as certain of one as we are of the other.* [**stillingfleet-1698**]

TL;DR

Argument against the Possibility of Material Mind

1. God is omnipotent to change body into an immaterial thing with the essence of body remaining. ϕ
2. If matter can be transubstantiated into mind, then it is impossible for matter to think. $\phi \rightarrow \neg\psi$
3. Therefore, it is impossible for matter to think. $\neg\psi$ [Modus Ponens]

Implicit Attack

The superaddition is unnecessary and impossible.

Can substance be transubstantiated between material and immaterial?
No, the matter cannot appear or disappear.
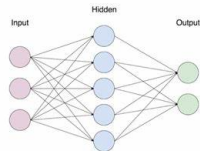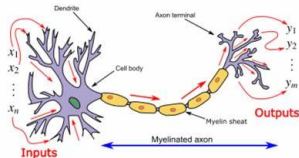
Modern Interpretation

Karl Marx's materialism [**marx**-**1932**]:

- ▶ Men's social beings determine their consciousness.
- ▶ Material comes primarily, consciousness secondarily.

Finding of the Brain Science:

- ▶ Mind is generated by neural cells.
- ▶ Mind is a product of material brain ⇒ material mind.

Modern mainstream view favors Locke's argument, i.e., material mind is possible.

What if the Mind does not even exist?

My Response

What if the Mind does not even exist?

▶ Our thoughts are just the result of the interaction of the material world. *No, it is Naive Materialism.*

What if the Mind does not even exist?

▶ Our thoughts are just the result of the interaction of the material world. *No, it is Naive Materialism.*

▶ The thinking matter is the representation of the Mind in the material world. *Yes, and mind can be generated by matter.*

How can the silicon turn into a running program?

▶ The program can be treated as a form of thinking, generated by the silicon. A simulation of our brain be like:

```
function Human() {
    while (alive()) { // check if the body is alive
        input(); // perceive the world
        think(); // generate idea and knowledge
        output(); // move or speak or play Genshin Impact
    }
    free(&mind); // release the soul
}
```

Analog of the Material Mind

How can the silicon turn into a running program?

▶ The program can be treated as a form of thinking, generated by the silicon. A simulation of our brain be like:

```
function Human() {
    while (alive()) { // check if the body is alive
        input(); // perceive the world
        think(); // generate idea and knowledge
        output(); // move or speak or play Genshin Impact
    }
    free(&mind); // release the soul
}
```

▶ People act as the God to make the silicon think.

Analog of the Material Mind

How can the silicon turn into a running program?

- ▶ The program can be treated as a form of thinking, generated by the silicon. A simulation of our brain be like:

```
function Human() {
    while (alive()) { // check if the body is alive
        input(); // perceive the world
        think(); // generate idea and knowledge
        output(); // move or speak or play Genshin Impact
    }
    free(&mind); // release the soul
}
```

- ▶ People act as the God to make the silicon think.
- ▶ The electronic signal is the representation of the program(mind) in the material world.

Are we living in a simulation run by the computer?
Is Digital Life possible?

Q & A

Thank you!

Temporary page!

LATEX was unable to guess the total number of pages correctly. A was some unprocessed data that should have been added to the this extra page has been added to receive it.

If you rerun the document (without altering it) this surplus page away, because LATEX now knows how many pages to expect for t document.