

# An Unfortunate Dualist

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Once upon a time there was a dualist. He believed that mind and matter are separate substances. Just how they interacted he did not pretend to know—this was one of the “mysteries” of life. But he was sure they were quite separate substances.

This dualist, unfortunately, led an unbearably painful life—not because of his philosophical beliefs, but for quite different reasons. And he had excellent empirical evidence that no respite was in sight for the rest of his life. He longed for nothing more than to die. But he was deterred from suicide by such reasons as: (1) he did not want to hurt other people by his death; (2) he was afraid suicide might be morally wrong; (3) he was afraid there *might* be an afterlife, and he did not want to risk the possibility of eternal punishment. So our poor dualist was quite desperate.

Then came the discovery of *the* miracle drug! Its effect on the taker was to annihilate the soul or mind entirely but to leave the body functioning *exactly* as before. Absolutely no observable change came over the taker; the body continued to act just as if it still had a soul. Not the closest friend or observer could possibly know that the taker had taken the drug, unless the taker informed him.

Do you believe that such a drug is impossible in principle? Assuming you believe it possible, would you take it? Would you regard it as immoral? Is it tantamount to suicide? Is there anything in Scriptures forbidding the use of such a drug? Surely, the *body* of the taker can still fulfill all its responsibilities on earth. Another

question: Suppose your spouse took such a drug, and you knew it. You would know that she (or he) no longer had a soul but acted just as if she did have one. Would you love your mate any less?

To return to the story, our dualist was, of course, delighted! Now he could annihilate himself (his *soul*, that is) in a way not subject to any of the foregoing objections. And so, for the first time in years, he went to bed with a light heart, saying: “Tomorrow morning I will go down to the drugstore and get the drug. My days of suffering are over at last!” With these thoughts, he fell peacefully asleep.

Now at this point a curious thing happened. A friend of the dualist who knew about this drug, and who knew of the sufferings of the dualist, decided to put him out of his misery. So in the middle of the night, while the dualist was fast asleep, the friend quietly stole into the house and injected the drug into his veins. The next morning the body of the dualist awoke—without any soul indeed—and the first thing it did was to go to the drugstore to get the drug. He took it home and, before taking it, said, “Now I shall be released.” So he took it and then waited the time interval in which it was supposed to work. At the end of the interval he angrily exclaimed: “Damn it, this stuff hasn’t helped at all! I still obviously have a soul and am suffering as much as ever!”

Doesn’t all this suggest that perhaps there might be something just a *little* wrong with dualism?

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