

# On the Mind/Body Problem: The Theory of Essence

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**ABSTRACT:** The classical mind/body problem can be approached empirically, using instances of the near-death experience (NDE) as experimental data. The monistic viewpoint, that the mind is the functioning of the brain, finds little support in the NDE data, while dualism, mind and body as separate entities, is consistent with NDE research to date. Comparison of the details of the NDE with predictions from theoretical cosmology shows strong similarities between the two and further strengthens the case for dualism. A theory of human nature is proposed that incorporates these similarities.

The mind/body problem has been a topic of great interest to philosophers, scientists, and psychologists throughout history. From the speculations of Plato, Aristotle, and other Greek philosophers to the dualist viewpoint of Descartes to modern psychology's material monist bent, the mind/body relationship has helped form the foundations of paradigms related to the understanding of human nature.

There are two fundamental positions one might reasonably take on the physical relationship between mind and body. I will call these the monist and dualist positions. The monist position is stated most economically as: the mind is nothing more than the biological functioning of the brain. Consider an analogy with computers. The monist might say that the brain corresponds to the central processing unit (CPU) of the computer, while the body and its organ systems are analogous to the peripherals in a computer system. The CPU serves to supervise

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