

# OpenTheo

## Are Logic and Reasoning Immaterial?

April 14, 2022



### #STRask - Stand to Reason

Questions about whether logic and reasoning aren't immaterial because they're activities of a physical brain and whether the fact that some people have a "blind mind's eye" counters the claim that the mind's ability to visualize images is evidence for the existence of a non-physical self.

\* How would you respond to someone who claims logic and reasoning aren't immaterial because they're activities of a physical brain?

\* Does the fact that some people have a "blind mind's eye" (aphantasia) effectively counter the claim that the mind's ability to visualize images is evidence for the existence of a non-physical self?

### Transcript

[Music] I'm Amy Hall, I'm here with Greg Koukl, and you're listening to the #STRask podcast from Stand to Reason. And welcome! We're glad you're here, we're glad that you contribute questions. We love to hear from you on Twitter with the hashtag #STRask.

Alright, Greg, ready for the first one? Yes, ma'am. Okay, this first question comes from John. How would you reply to someone who makes the claim that logic and reasoning aren't immaterial or non-physical because they are activities of a physical brain? I know the logic is flawed, but I can't seem to articulate it.

Well, I'm going to give a real simple principle here that I hope will help. And I have tip to JP Morlin on this because I spent months in the day. I spent months talking about these things in the mind, body, problem, class, philosophy of mind, material.

Here's the very simplest way to think about it. Physical things have physical qualities. No duh.

Physical things have physical qualities. Well, what would be a physical quality? Extension

in space. Physical things are located in space.

That is the nature of physicality. They extend in space. They occupy space.

All physical things occupy some kind of space. Even gas, alright? Even atoms, alright? They are also not only extended space, but they are located at a place in space. So if you had a three-dimensional grid, in principle, you could say where each particular thing is located in that grid because it is physically located.

Thirdly, all physical things respond to the laws of physics and chemistry. If they did not respond to the laws of physics and chemistry, science could not work. Alright? All physical events are events that must have been caused by prior events.

Okay, think of Domino's falling. One Domino hits another, hits another, and it hits another. It is the nature of these physicality that things move as a result of something moving against them.

Again, if that is not reliable, science cannot work. This is the point of scientific repeatability. Alright? So once again, all physical things have physical properties.

So let me offer a simple syllogism well known because it is often used. All men are mortal. Socrates is a man.

Therefore, Socrates is mortal. Okay? That is a deductive syllogism that is valid. That means the conclusion follows from the premises.

Now, whether the premises are true is another issue, if they are true, then the syllogism is sound. That means the conclusion is certain. Alright? We're just going to talk about validity though.

All men are mortal. Socrates is a man. Therefore, Socrates is mortal.

Now, I just want people to reflect on that rational syllogism. Okay? All A is B. C is A. Therefore, C is B. I guess there are different ways you can characterize it. You don't even need substance.

You can just use the figures to demonstrate the form. That's logic. What about what I just described or any other logical characterization? Has any of the characteristics that I just mentioned of physicality? Does that syllogism extend in space not as spoken or as thought? Alright? The tokens may be in space.

You can write it on a piece of paper, but those are the tokens. Those are the things that represent the thing. The invisible immaterial thing.

Alright? Is the syllogism affected by the laws of physics and chemistry? Oh, it's true that if all men are mortal and Socrates is a man, that Socrates is a man at 32 degrees

Fahrenheit. You move that sucker up to boiling. All bets are off.

Well, that's ridiculous. It's a category error because physical states do not affect the legitimacy or the accuracy or to use the proper terms, the validity or soundness of rational syllogisms. All reason is like this.

Not just reason. All thoughts are like this. All non-physical.

I mean, you could think of anything you might wonder. Is that physical? Then you realize, well, it doesn't have physical qualities. So if it doesn't have physical qualities, it's not physical.

It's non-physical. And these things cannot be reduced to physicality. I don't care how much brainwork is involved in the expression or the, in a certain sense, the utilization of these things by an individual.

It doesn't make it the brain. Okay? Why? Because the brain is physical and these things aren't. All that shows is that the brain can be involved in the process of reasoning.

No duh. That doesn't make the brain the reasons. Also, pardon me, but no duh.

But that is a thing that gets so lost on people. Well, if my brain wasn't working, I couldn't reason. Yes.

And if your car wasn't working, you couldn't drive it. But that doesn't mean you are the car. It means there are two elements that are involved, a car that works and a driver that can drive.

I guess that doesn't apply anymore with the new cars that drive themselves. But you get the point. Okay? Physical things have physical qualities, non-physical things.

Oh, let me back it up and put it this way. Physical things have physical qualities. And things that don't have physical qualities are not physical things.

Now, that is another syllogism. It's modus ponens or modus tolerance or whatever. But I'd have to think about it for a while.

But there's a line of reasoning there that's just straightforward. It's not that hard unless somebody is deeply and profoundly committed to denying the non-physical world. And I'll tell you an example of this.

Daniel Dennett, one of the new atheists, of course, they're not new anymore. They're 20 years old. Daniel Dennett, oh, he's not 20.

He's much older than that. But they're never going to get my point. Daniel Dennett says that consciousness that is one's awareness of things is an illusion.

It's not real. Why? Because it has been impossible for materialistic philosophers. Scientists don't count because we're not talking about science in this case.

We're talking about something metaphysical beyond the physical. They have not been able to reduce it to the physical where scientists can work with it, because consciousness doesn't succumb to that. And because they have had no luck in reducing consciousness to something physical, for an obvious reason, it's not physical, that he is left with only one option as a materialist.

It doesn't exist. It's an illusion. Why would he say it's an illusion? Because it has non-physical qualities.

He's a materialist, a physicalist, and so non-physical things with non-physical qualities must not exist. The problem is he went out of the frying pan and into the fire. Because what is an illusion? An illusion is not something physical.

If an illusion was physical, every single person in principle would have access to the same thing. I have a microphone in front of me. Every single person has in principle access to this microphone just as I do.

They can come in and look in the studio. There it is. But you can't do that with an illusion.

Why not? Since all physical things are in principle third person public, and an illusion is not third person public, then an illusion is not physical. It's non-physical. And so for all his attempts at getting around the reality of consciousness, his solution doesn't solve anything.

Plus, it's even worse than that. Because you can ask yourself, what is an illusion? Remember, consciousness is an illusion. Well, an illusion is when your consciousness is being appeared too falsely.

Only conscious beings have illusions. You have to be conscious to have an illusion. So, if consciousness is illusion, what's having the illusion? Is that another illusion? Having the illusion? This is nonsense.

This is obviously nonsense. And when I say obviously, I won't think that most people would have put that together. But once they hear me put it together, they realize, oh, yeah, no, duh.

Right. Now, here is where the trip up comes in when there are physical activities that accompany mental or soulish activities. All right, because there is a correlation between physical activities and mental activities, they think the physical, the mental activities are physical.

Okay. But this is where we come back down to this very simple notion. And for the philosophy, philosophically minded there, it's the called liveness is law of the indiscernibility of identicals.

Okay, this has been well thought through by really smart people. But you don't have to be a really smart people person to know that physical things have physical qualities and non physical things have non physical qualities. It's like I said, it's so obvious.

He just put it, liveness put it in a very precise kind of fashion. And so, just because there is a correlation between brain activity and mental soulish activity does not mean that the brain is the soul. Just because the brain is necessary for us to reason, by the way, I will say while the soul is in the body, that's another issue, I'll get to it a moment.

Just because the brain is necessary for us to reason while the soul is in the body does not mean that the brain is the soul. It can't be reduced to that. It is such a common mistake.

It is always mentioned in various forms. Well, if I tap this part of your brain, then you're going to have this kind of thought. Okay, so what? Well, then the brain is the thought.

No, it's not the brain is physical. The thought's not physical. How can it be the same? They have different qualities.

Again, no doubt. Okay. Now, there's one other element called neuro death experiences.

And a lot of people will wave their hands, they all blah, blah, blah, science fiction. I want them to consider the idea, the concept or the reality of remote viewing. Remote viewing is when a person, a self is no longer present in the body because the body is dead.

But the self is not. The self goes somewhere else. Watches something particular, take place, comes back, enters the body.

If you want to use that kind of language, the body becomes alive again. The conscious self is now aware of what the conscious self saw and heard in a different location while the body was here in the surgery room and can report it and it can be verified. And there are hundreds and hundreds, a probably now thousands of these kinds of things and they cannot be explained by any other means than what they appear to be.

Remote viewing of a person's soul when their body was somewhere else. It is powerful evidence that the soul is not the body because the soul could be somewhere else reasoning, observing, drawing conclusions, all the rational stuff without a brain. And then when there is a reuniting, the person comes back alive, whatever, then they can report these things.

So there is no reason to be intimidated by physicalists. They do not have a case. And shall I say again, this is not tricky.

It is not hard. You don't need a PhD or a master's, even a bachelor's in philosophy. You don't need to know anything about philosophy.

Reflect with your common sense. Physical things have physical qualities, non-physical things have non-physical qualities. And they're different.

And if the thing you have in mind does not extended space, doesn't have weight, doesn't have mass, doesn't respond to the laws of chemistry and physics, etc. Then it's not physical. And by the way, if everything were physical, there would be no opportunity to even think accurately about anything because all of our thoughts would be one of the dominoes influenced by something before we'd be completely deterministic.

And we'd never be able to know anything at all. So that brings us right back to the question specifically about logic. Well, logic is a description of reality.

It's a description of how things are related to one another in reality. And that's why conforming our ideas and our thinking to logic, actually attempting to conform our ideas to logic. That brings us closer.

Nice qualification. That brings us closer to the truth because logic helps you to determine truth. Now, if logic is merely the workings of the brain, how is it just the way the brain works and it's something physical, then how is it that we make mistakes? How is it that we are trying to conform our ideas to logic rather than logic coming out of our brains automatically? Right, because the laws of nature by and larger inviolable.

So if logic is simply a process of the natural processes that must occur given prior conditions, then we should all be logically sound in what we believe. But of course, that can't be the case because if it's all event causation, one thing happened after another, then all of our thoughts are determined. They are not there.

We don't, we don't, in a certain sense, litigate our thoughts through the process of reason to find out which are true or which are false. We don't go through that process. It's all mechanical.

We're just biological machines. So we know for sure that logic does not originate with the workings of our brains. That's not how it works.

Okay, so building on what you said so far, Greg, here's a question from Greg B. Greg uses the mind's ability to visualize images as an evidence for the existence of a non-physical self. I've seen atheists counter this by pointing out that some people have a quote, blind mind's eye. It's called aphantasia.

They can't visualize anything. How would you respond to this? All right. Before you answer, let me just explain this because I had to look this up.

I'd never heard of this condition. But apparently there are people who cannot visualize things with their minds and they're not people who are blind. I just mean people who have sight in the normal world.

They can't visualize things in their mind. In fact, I saw this one story of a man who after he had a minor surgery, then he could no longer visualize things with his mind. So he had been able to, and so clearly something physical happened, and then he was unable to visualize.

So how would you respond to this? Well, there's a tactic in the new tactics book called So Actually the Power of So. I wish I would have named it So What? It's much easier. So What? All right.

There is this quality. Atheists counter my illustration. What I do in my illustration is I have people imagine some scenario, then I ask them, where is the picture? And the picture, of course, is not in their brain.

They can see something. They can even describe details and colors, etc. activities that they imagine or just think of a dream you had last night, if you recall it, there's lots you could bring to mind even now.

But none of that is physical because it's not located in a physical place. You're the non physical eyes of your non physical self are seeing this non physical thing in a non physical place. And this becomes an evidence of the soul.

All right. Now, so some atheists say, well, some people can't do that. And I said, okay, so what? So what are the implications for my argument? The illustration that I give to support my argument from the fact that some people can't do that.

Here's the implication. Then I with some people, I cannot use that means to demonstrate they have a soul. I can use some other means to demonstrate that they have a soul.

All right. We to suggest that because do you do the atheist think that I think that if they can't imagine a picture in their mind that they have no that they have no mind? I mean, this is this is pardon me, but this is a silly complaint. And so so what? That's the that's the response to explain to me, atheist, how the fact that some people can't picture their mind that this refutes my argument for the soul.

This is this is merely an illustration. Not an illustration. It's an anecdote, so to speak.

It's something you could it's an exercise that you could do. But just because a person is incapable of that exercise doesn't mean their souls don't exist. Everybody else is capable of that except for this small people.

Do we conclude there that well, therefore, lots of people have souls. The atheists would

have to say because of the evidence, but some people don't know they just don't have that capacity that capability of the soul. They have all kinds of other soulless capabilities.

They're interacting. If they can tell you that they can't do this, and that's the only way to find out whether a person has this capability, if they can tell you, I can't imagine anything in their in my mind. I can't picture anything in their mind.

How do they know that? Because they have private personal access, first person private access to the contents of their mind, and they realize their minds can't do this particular thing. But the only way they can do this report that is if they have access to their minds. They know what their minds are capable of doing and what they aren't.

Okay, look at some people can't reason well. Right, we're talking about reason and logic as part of this soullish activity. Oh, well, that person is really stupid.

He can't reason well. Oh, he must not have a soul then. If you're saying that reason is in the soul, don't say, well, I'm saying you can't do that thing well.

It's so dumb. Look, I have a physical body. Physical body allows me to eat.

Well, wait a minute. No, some people can't eat. So there.

So there what that demonstrates, I don't have a physical body. No, it just means that some people can't do the things that normal physical bodies do. It doesn't mean that they don't have a physical body.

This is so vacuous. As a as a as a challenge against the illustration I'm using to the point I'm making from with the anecdote, it's a vacuous as a challenge to the broader point I'm making with the anecdote of the ability to visualize that demonstrates that there's an immaterial realm that your soul occupies. There's all kinds of other ways I could do it just because that one doesn't work for some people doesn't mean anything.

So how would you respond if they come back and say, well, the fact that the physical change made it go away proves that it's physical. Okay, the physical change made what go away? Made their vision, made their ability to visualize go away. They had a physical change in their brain.

Now they're longer visuals. Okay, I'm just role playing. How does that prove that it's physical as opposed to there being a connection between the physical activity and the outcome normally, which is an image and how does it prove that it's physical? Is the image physical? Where is it located in? These are my questions I'd ask.

Is it located in space somewhere? Is it extend? Does it does it does the image, you know, respond to chemistry? I mean, does it might be that some chemical problem of the brain cuts off the ability to see the image? Okay, but the image doesn't have all of these



physical qualities. And by the way, I'm identifying things that are necessary qualities of physicality. Okay.

And one of them is third person public. All right, can I see the picture inside of somebody's head? No. Well, there's no picture in there anyway, because that guy can't do that.

Well, it's not in his head anyway, wherever it would have been, it's not there. But does he show other solo activity? So I'm going to ask, I'm just going to ask, just speak how it is a non sequitur to say, if a physical process isn't present, a mental process isn't present. Therefore, the mental process isn't mental, it's physical that you haven't demonstrated that you have just demonstrated that the mental process is dependent on the physical process.

That's all you've shown. Okay. Now, how do we know whether both are physical or one is physical or mental? You observe, as it were, you reflect on the nature of the thing and ask, does it have physical qualities? Does it have mental qualities? Non physical qualities.

This is not hard. But that kind of challenge just shows how deeply entrenched and thoughtless, to be honest with you, thoughtless, these dogmatic physicalists are, they say foolish things like consciousness is an illusion. That is foolish.

Please, professor, that's just borderline dumb. But they say that because they have to preserve their materialistic paradigm instead of taking reality as it comes to them. That's what we're doing.

We're not forced to believe in the soul because we're Christians. Souls exist apart from anything you read in the Bible, you can figure this out. But it turns out to be consistent with the Christian worldview.

So it shows the fit there between a Christian. But because this has metaphysical/religious ramifications, people aren't going to go there. No way.

I'm just, no. Well, why would you say, no, ah, let me think of a good reason to deny it. And it's not a good reason, but it's good for them because they don't want to countenance the reality of it.

Well, thank you, Greg, for your answers. And thank you, John and Greg, for your questions. We always appreciate hearing from you.

So send us those questions on Twitter with the hashtag #STRAsk or send it through our website on our contact page and just make sure you use the hashtag #STRAsk in your question. And it'll go straight to me. Please, we love your questions.

We love to choose from them. If you have something you've been putting off, go ahead and send that question in. This is Amy Hall and Greg Cokle for Stand to Reason.

[Music]