

Embodied Soul



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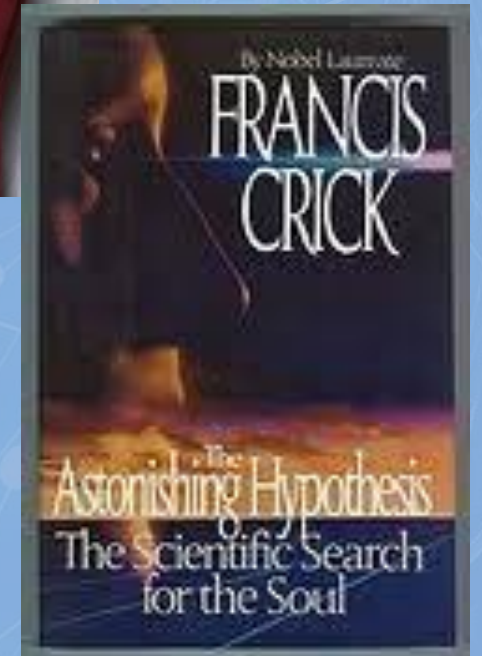
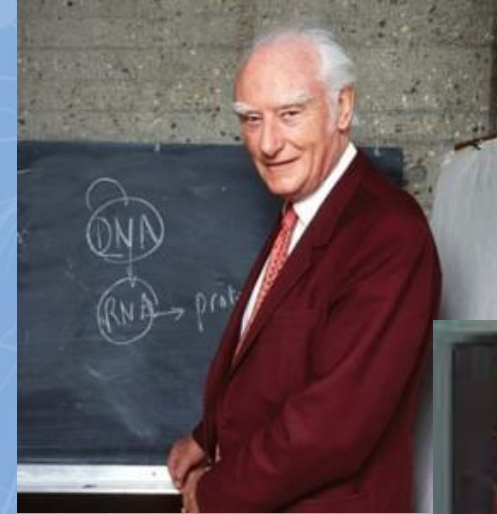
Theological Anthropology in Christian Tradition

- Dualism: “Rational soul” and “body” (*versus* a holistic view)
- Doctrine of **salvation**
 - When I die, my soul leaves my body and ascends to heaven.
 - The “spiritual” nature of salvation (*versus* resurrection of the body)



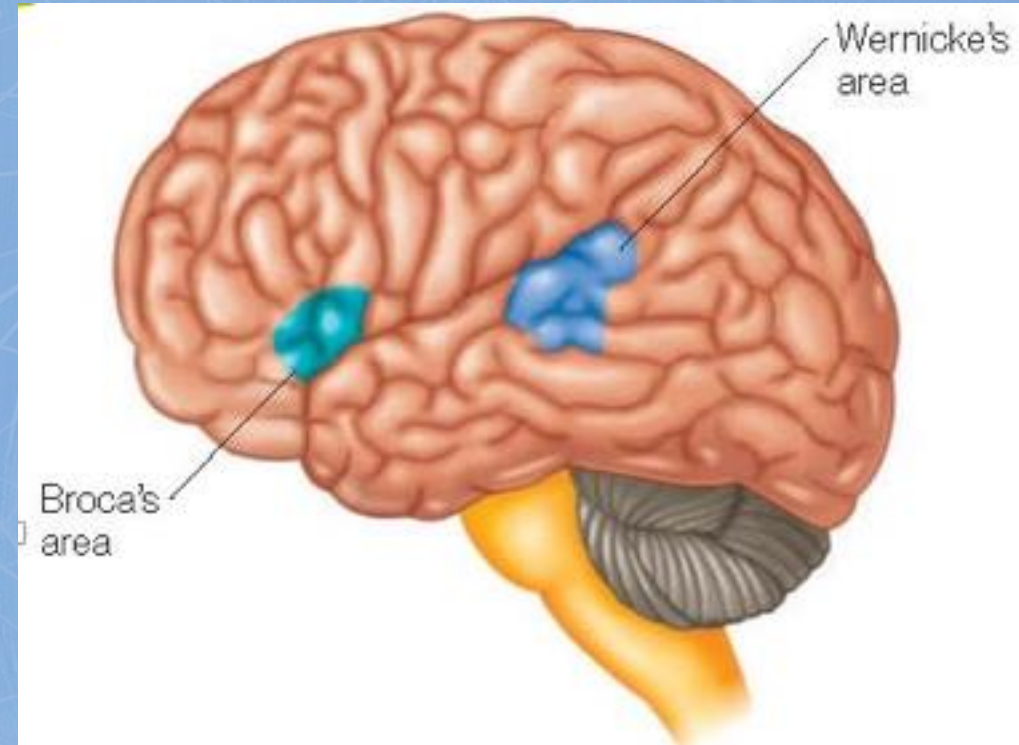
Astounding hypothesis: Francis Crick

- Reductionism
- Naturalism
- “Your joys and your sorrows, your memories and your ambitions, your sense of personal identity and free will, are in fact no more than the behavior of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules. As Lewis Carroll’s Alice might have phrased it: ‘You’re nothing but a pack of neurons.’” (p.3).



Mind function = Brain function?

- Localization of brain functions
- Language production is impaired by damage to **Broca's area**
 - Frontal lobe
 - Combine sound and words
- Language comprehension is impaired by damage to **Wernicke's area**
 - Temporal lobe
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fFGmCRc0njk>



Mind function = Brain function?

- Neuroscientist Antonio Damasio studied a patient whose **frontal lobes** was damaged by a tumor. He lost emotion, while other intellectual abilities are intact.
- His ability to make decisions was impaired. He could logically analyze the pros and cons of different options, and was aware of what should be done. But he could not make a simple decision, such as which restaurant to go for lunch.
- A pure rational being without emotion, such as Spock in *Star Trek*, CANNOT function in the real world.



Mind function = Brain function?

- When the injury happens in the back of the right hemisphere of the brain, it causes **Capgras syndrome**.
- Also known as **imposter syndrome**.
- People who experience this syndrome will have the irrational belief that someone they know has been replaced by an imposter.
- “You are not my wife! You are not my son!”
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dqBGzkz1oDU>



Mind function = Brain function?

- **Romanian Orphans**
- During the rule of Nicolae Ceausescu, the Romanian government encouraged population growth and promised that the government would take care of their children.
- After the fall of the regime in 1989, it was found that those children suffered from insufficient care and lived in horrible conditions.
- Their cognitive functions were severely damaged.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VCeWr8OFuEs>

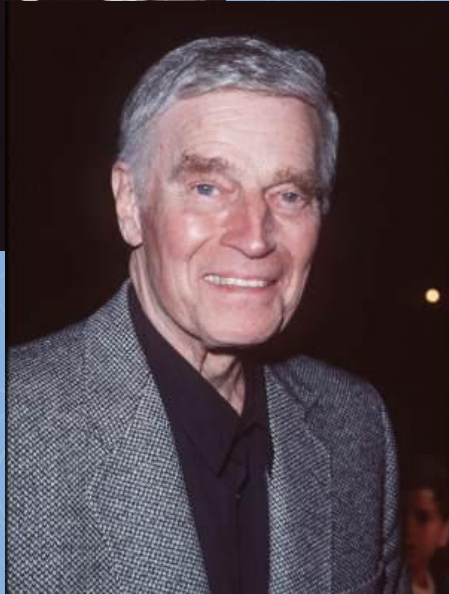
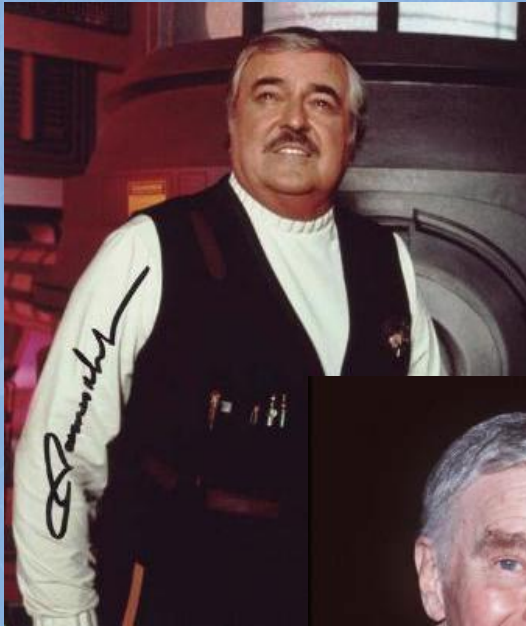


Mind function = Brain function?

- **Wild child**
- Genie had been living under severe abuse, neglect, and social isolation since she was born in 1957.
- She was rescued at 13, but could not recover normal cognitive functions and social skills in spite of therapy.



What do all these people have in common?



Mind function = Brain function?

- For older adults (aged 65 and over) **Alzheimer's disease** is among the top five causes of death.
- Progressive irreversible deterioration of the brain.

Physics Nobel laureate Charles Kao dies after long battle with Alzheimer's

Top News | Jane Cheung 24 Sep 2018



Charles Kao Kuen - known as the "father of fiber optics" for his discovery in the 1960s of certain physical properties of glass - died yesterday aged 84.

Mind function = Brain function?

- An analysis of 10 years of FDA data shows that a class of drugs called **dopamine agonists**, used mainly to treat Parkinson's disease, might cause maladaptive psychological side effects, such as **compulsive gambling** and **excessive sexual activity**.

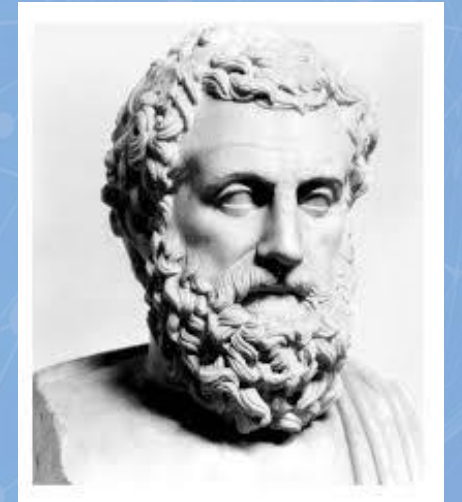
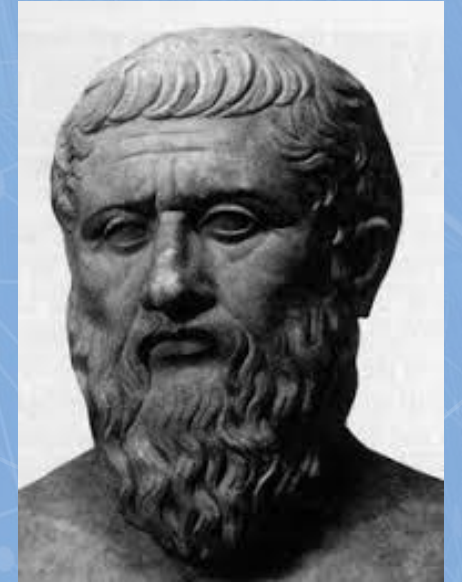


Questions

- **Challenge to reductionism:** If the mind is reduced to nothing but the brain, then my "thought" is biologically determined. Am I morally responsible for my behaviors?
- **Challenge to Christian theology:** If a Christian lost some or all his/her cognitive functions due to brain damage, as described in the previous slides, will he/she fully restore his/her mind when his/her soul goes to heaven?

Theological Anthropology: Constitution of human nature

- Greek philosophical tradition (especially the **Aristotelian**) : it was believed to be possible to discern different substances in the human person
- **Platonic dualism**: Plato believed that the true substances are not physical bodies, which are ephemeral, but the eternal Forms of which bodies are imperfect copies.
- Source: VELI-MATTI KÄRKKÄINEN



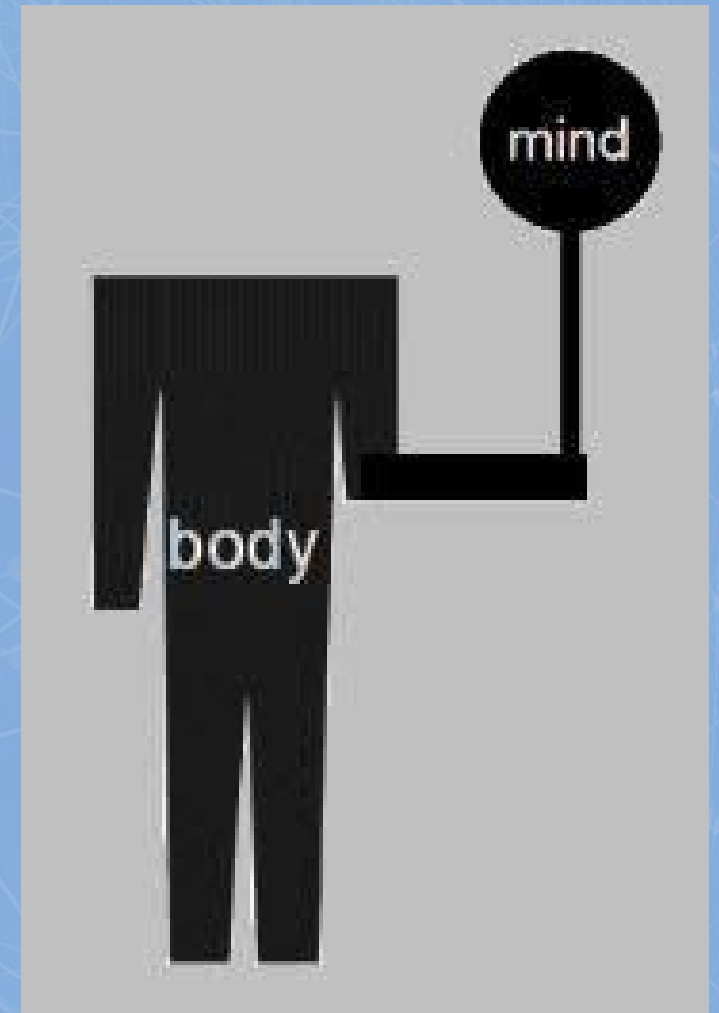
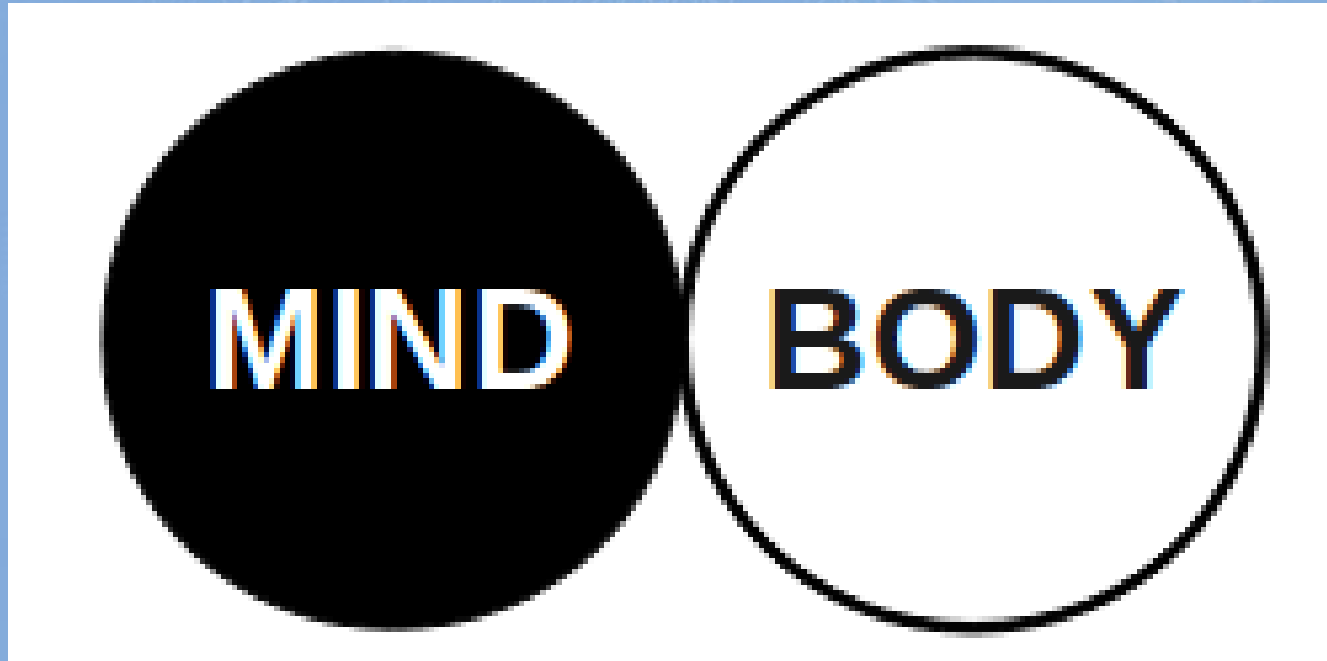
The Constitution of Human Nature

- **Trichotomism**: Three parts (Body, soul, and spirit)
- **Dichotomism**: Two parts (Body and soul [spirit])
- **Holism/Monism** : All in one

Trichotomism



Dichotomism

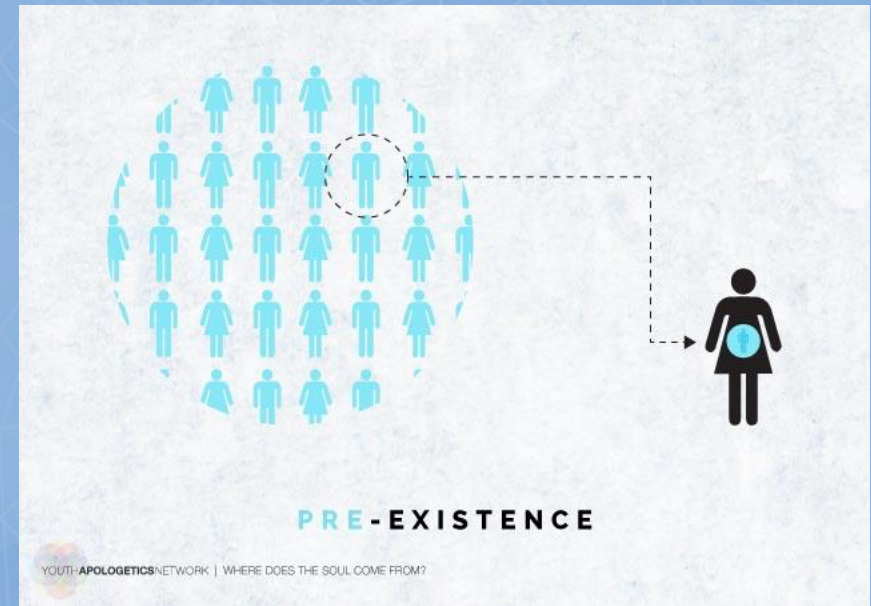


Dichotomism

- Distinguishes two substances
 - the soul as the “**immaterial**” or inner part
 - the body, the **material**, physical part
- Popular among classic theologians
- Biblical basis #1: Seemingly interchangeable usage of the terms “soul” and “spirit” (e.g., Heb 12:23 and Rev 6:9 and numerous others)
- Biblical basis #2: Seems to contrast the body with the soul/spirit, e.g., Matt 10:28

The Origin of the Soul: #1 Pre-existence of the soul

- human souls are **already in existence** before the creation of the bodies and in the conception the soul joins the body
- background is to be found in the Platonic view of the immortality of the soul

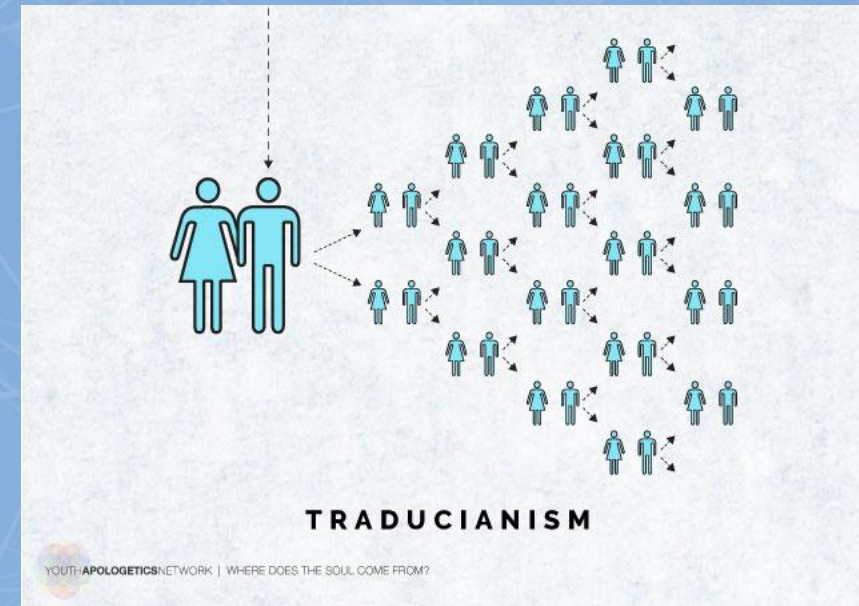


The Origin of the Soul: #2 Creationism

- Each soul comes into existence by means of a direct **creative act of God**
- God creates the soul in close connection with the conception of the body (although exact time may be uncertain)
- prevalent among classical theologians
- has been the major viewpoint both Roman Catholicism and Protestantism
- biblical allusions Isa 42:5 and Heb 12:9

The Origin of the Soul: #3 Traducianism

- “Bodies generating bodies and souls generating souls. The union of husband and wife produces a unit human being consisting of body and soul. Consequently, **the soul of the infant originates simultaneously with the conception of the body.**” (Stanley J. Grenz)
- most widely held view among Evangelicals
- a long history going back to Tertullian



Discussion of human nature in the past...

- Much of early Christian theology tended to be heavily influenced by the **Platonic dualism**
- The role of the **bodily nature of humanity** is less valued
- The **Reformation theology** followed the dualistic tradition of the past
- Up to the beginning of the 20th Century, many Christians took dualism for granted

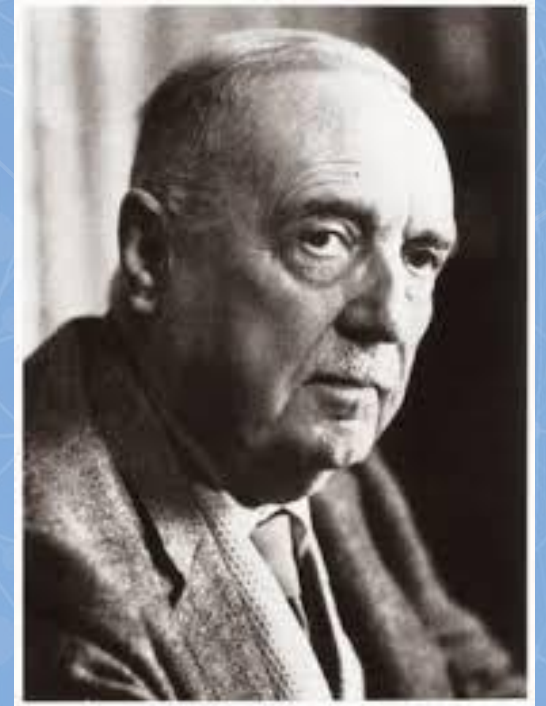
Implications of soul and ethics (and ministry)

1. Saving **individual “souls”** instead of social justices
2. Negative view of the **world** (with dispensational eschatology: why care about the environment?)
3. Negative view of **body/flesh**, Hyper-sexualization: Elevating personal **sexual sin**



The Current Emphasis on Holistic and Monistic Approaches

- Contemporary thinkers tend to see human being as an ontological unity with multiple functions
- The NT scholar R. **Bultmann** argued that Paul's use of the term **soma** refers not only to "flesh" but to the whole person
- However, coming from a "Liberal" thinker, most Evangelicals rejected the idea and tried to defend the traditional view



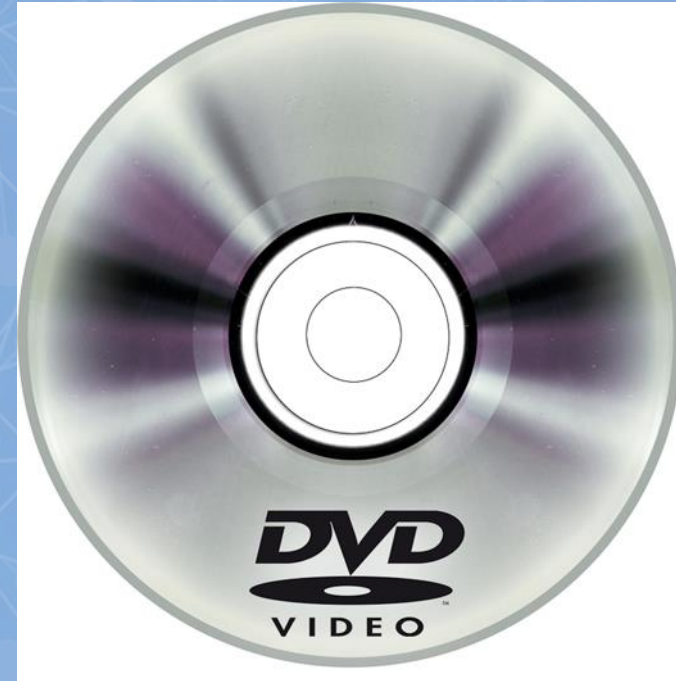
The Current Emphasis on Holistic and Monistic Approaches (Cont.)

- **Nancy Murphy** : *"[In contemporary thought, there is] a gradual replacement of a dualistic account of the person along with a view of the afterlife as immortality of the soul...by a recognition of the holistic character of biblical conceptions of the person, often while still presupposing temporarily 'parts,' and ...by a holistic but also physicalist account of the person"*



Non-reductive physicalism

- The person is a physical organism whose complex functioning, both in society and in relation to God, gives rise to “higher” human capacities such as morality and spirituality
- Those higher qualities cannot be reduced to the lower level although they emerge from them; even then, one should not speak of “soul” (or spirit or similar) distinct from the physical
- You cannot understand music by studying the **physical structure** of a DVD or Blue Ray.



Final reflection

- In light of neuro-psychology, **radical dualism** should be rejected.
- In light of biblical theology, **radical reductionism** (You are nothing but a pack of neurons) should be rejected. It leads to determinism (denial of freedom of will in any meaningful sense) and, atheistic naturalism.
- Assessment of **nonreductive physicalism**: An appealing option for contemporary theology, but still with challenge, “Is it reductionist after all?”