

A NEW METAPHYSICS FOR CHRISTIAN DEMONOLOGY:
PSYCHODYNAMIC IMMATERIALISM

BY

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ABSTRACT

Many philosophers throughout Christianity's history have asserted the existence of intermediary beings or, in more familiar terms, *angels* and *demons*. According to Christianity, God, angels, demons, and human souls are all thought to share a common nature, namely 'spirit.' This 'spirit' is thought to signify immateriality. Yet each is said to interact with the physical world. God, who is conceived of as omnipotent, can interact with the world simply at will. Human souls are paired with bodies which provides them the equipment to interact with the world. Angels receive special assistance from God by which they interact with the world. But demons, unlike angels, are not likely to benefit from any special assistance from God (unlike angels), nor are they themselves omnipotent (unlike God), nor are they paired with bodies (unlike humans). However, demons are believed to interact occasionally with this physical world. But how can an immaterial demon interact with a material world? Any appeals to the same explanations for how other immaterial beings (viz. humans, angels, or God) interact with the physical world will not do. I propose a solution that is consonant with their being purely immaterial creatures and yet does not rely on such an *ad hoc* manoeuvre. I argue that they actually never do interact with the physical world apart from their exploitation of human beings as proxies. I propose to explain their interaction in terms of their basic ability to cognitively interact with embodied souls. I call this sustaining affirmation of their immateriality along with this particular relationship they have with the world through human beings *psychodynamic immaterialism*.

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CONTENTS

Chapter

1.	Introduction	1
2.	Metaphysical Interpretations of Demonology in Christian History .	21
3.	Psychodynamic Immaterialism: Pure Immaterialism and Cognitive Interactionism	60
4.	The Coherence of the Notion of Pure Immaterialism . .	91
5.	The Case for the Pure Immateriality of Demons	134
6.	Objections to the Pure Immateriality of Demons	160
7.	The Coherence of the Notion of Soul-Soul Interaction . .	192
8.	The Case for the Exclusivity of Demonic Cognitive Interaction .	217
9.	Objections to the Exclusivity of Demonic Cognitive Interaction .	247
10.	Concluding Summary and the Future of the Philosophy of Demonology	284
	Bibliography	305

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Setting the Stage

The ontic category of *intermediary beings*, or *angels*, has long been considered a topic on the fringe of intellectual investigation. Perhaps this is due to its subject matter being relegated to the specialised discipline of theology. The old question, ‘How many angels can dance on the head of a pin?’ is often a clichéd reminder that metaphysical discussions about angels can never be, so we are told, resolved from the standpoint of discursive reasoning. However, belief in such beings along with their alleged characteristics may be apprehended through the medium of what is called ‘revealed theology.’¹ In an attempt to overturn this perception for the analytic philosopher, I shall be exploring one of the greatest intellectual mysteries and challenges to an overtly Christian philosophy: *Demonology*.² Demonology has long been a subject often considered too toxic for academics to entertain – toxic for both theologians and philosophers alike. As such it is not hard to appreciate how the metaphysics of demonology remains underdeveloped as it has been quietly relocated to the background of the Christian *Weltanschauung*.

¹ *Revealed theology* refers to the view that ‘we can know about God only through God’s own self-disclosure, that is through *revelation* [...] a divine self-disclosure through such means as visions, dreams, oracles, or, as was the case with the faith of Israel, through God’s mighty actions within human history’. David Stewart, *Exploring the Philosophy of Religion*, 6th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007), p. 118.

² I recognise that demonology *simpliciter* is not the sole province of a Christian world-view. For an extended survey of its intimation outside of Christianity, see Edward Langton, *Essentials of Demonology* (London: Epworth, 1949).

Despite the paucity of philosophical investigation into demonology, as a religious practise it figures quite prominently in populations around the world.³ Typically, philosophers will engage subjects that command the attention and assent of the masses. We can see this in religious practices in general where certain doctrines and praxes that receive widespread attention tend to be investigated by philosophers. Their goals may vary in engaging such beliefs, but they share in common attempts to elucidate those beliefs and their accompanying doctrines by applying the tools of critical examination to them. Demonology is no exception. It is an under-researched area amongst philosophers, perhaps for those reasons noted above. Therefore, one of the goals of this thesis is to take a step toward remedying this – a step that helps to relieve this lack of work in what we might refer to as a philosophy of demonology.

For millennia, religious thought has sought to articulate an aetiology of evil and suffering. Typically, as in monotheism, this has taken the form of a belief in demons personal agents that have intercourse with human beings. In Christianity's principal source of doctrinal authority, the Bible, these intercourses are clearly felt by participants. But since such intercourses appear not to be felt by the majority in recent history, it has left the modern sceptic in a safe and easy position to deny the existence of such creatures. Yet belief in demons, even among academics, continues into the modern and post-modern worlds thriving primarily as a belief based on scripture.⁴ While believers in the existence of demons have to

³ Christopher Partridge and Eric Christianson track the notable increase in such belief in America by pointing out that in 1968 '60 percent believed in the literal existence of Satan. In 1994 it had risen to 65.5 percent and in 2001 a Gallup poll found that it had again risen to 68 percent [...]. During the last decade, it has grown from 65.5 percent in 1994 to 70 percent in 2004'. *The Lure of the Dark Side: Satan & Western Demonology in Popular Culture* (London: Routledge, 2014), p. 11.

⁴ According to a North American study by the Barna Group, at least 26% of Christians believe that Satan is a real being ('Most American Christians Do Not Believe that Satan or the Holy Spirit Exist', The Barna Group (2009), <<http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/12-faithspirituality/260-most-american-christians-do-not-believe->

make their case to a modern world, they must also satisfactorily offer a coherent understanding of *what* they are.⁵ The third-century Christian philosopher Origen once made the following observation that applies equally to the modern situation as it did when he wrote these words:

Regarding the devil and his angels, and the opposing influences, the teachings of the Church has laid down that these beings exist indeed; but what they are, or how they exist, it has not explained with sufficient clearness.⁶

Attempts to formulate such a philosophy of demonology have been confounded by the lack of any explicit biblical teachings that clarify such matters. But as with other doctrines with similar deficits of biblical material, Christian philosophers and theologians had gone to work in clarifying, and in some cases ‘creedalising’, their results. As will be demonstrated, Christian philosophers are far from offering even a *coherent* metaphysical portrait of demons much less a creedal one on which Christianity’s followers may sign off.

The goal of this thesis is to offer up a philosophical thought experiment. I do not intend to defend or offer an appraisal of any particular kind of demonology. Instead, my arguments

that-*śātān-or-the-holy-spirit-exis*> [accessed 21 April 2015].); Alvin Plantinga, in commenting on academia, writes that '[t]here are large numbers of educated contemporaries (including even some with Ph.D's!) who believe [...] that there are both demons and spirits who are active in the contemporary world. As a matter of historical fact, there are any number of contemporaries, and contemporary intellectuals very well acquainted with science, who don't feel any problem at all in pursuing science and also believing in miracles, angels, Christ's resurrection, the lot'. Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 405.

⁵ I am deliberately avoiding the use of the term ‘demonologist’ in referring to one who studies or believes in demons since it carries with it a pop cultural sense of one who involves herself in the practice of expelling demons from people, material objects, and locations.

⁶ Origen, preface to *De Principiis*, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Volume IV*, translated from Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and Arthur Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo, NY: The Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1885), p. 240.

are intended to be theoretical. That is to say, if one supposes that demons exist as suggested by Christian thinkers past and present, I am suggesting that there is a coherent way to philosophically elucidate the metaphysics of such demons. As this kind of project, it is functionally no different than René Descartes' famous thought experiment of the 'evil demon' (*genium malignum*) who is bent on deceiving the reflective Descartes into thinking that no claim to foundational knowledge can be maintained.⁷ While Descartes' *faux* demon allows him (and readers) to appreciate the vulnerability of scepticism concerning many claims to knowledge thought to be incorrigible, it is not a defence of the existence of an actual demon. Analogously, my thesis modestly asks, *What if this kind of demonology were true?* and proceeds to think about the metaphysics implied by the question. It is a mere thought experiment but one with broad application. All thinkers – and not just Christians – can consider the model I will propose as a particular way of viewing the world. All the while I am in no way endorsing or proposing that such beings in fact exist in the ways espoused by the various believers in demons. Many crude demonologies have been advanced in the past. And those demonologies have led to some unfortunate and unacceptable abuses in practice (i.e. killings, witch trials, tortures, patient abuses, and 'ethnic cleansings'). Instead, this thesis is positioned as one that neither endorses nor encourages any particular kind of demonology that may lead to such detrimental social consequences. This work stands as a pure exercise in philosophical speculation and nothing more.

This raises the important question as to my focus: Why delimit the search for a metaphysical framework to demonology only? It may seem perplexing as to why I have chosen

⁷ René Descartes, 'Meditation I', *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641).

to consider such an exotic area of investigation as demonology to serve as a baseline for this metaphysical study when it seems equally feasible and seemingly appropriate that the same (metaphysical) results could be obtained by thinking about the more benign and less derided parent field of *angelology*.⁸ Angels are by far less exotic and more benign than demons, not to mention *primary* objects of study in seminaries around the world when it comes to studying the created beings in a realm outside of the physical universe. Historically, this has indeed been the order of the investigation – that one attends to a study of angelology in order to inform one’s demonology. Charles Edward Hopkin, in his dissertation on Thomas Aquinas’ influence on the perverse witch hunts, reflects just such an approach when he writes about how he sees and derives the metaphysics of demons from their angelic counterparts:

[Demons] differ from the good angels only in the fact and consequence of their malice. The demonic nature is, therefore, angelic nature, deprived of the ministry by which the good angels serve God and of the supernatural vision of beatitude.⁹

Merrill Unger, who did his doctoral work on demonology, applies the same methodological approach in his assessment of how demons supposedly manifest to percipients:

⁸ Surely there are other reasons one might engage in demonology apart from considerations about angelology (such as the peculiar features of demons possessing and tempting humans). But in considering demonic *ontology*, it is to angelology that one typically appeals – particularly since more is written about the nature of the good angels and not so much about the bad ones.

⁹ Charles Edward Hopkin, ‘The Share of Thomas Aquinas in the Growth of the Witchcraft Delusion’ (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1941), p. 29.

If the substance of demons is spirit, what shall be said of their form and visibility? May they assume a definite shape, and be seen by human eyes? [...] [A]ngels, as spirits, are invisible to men (Ps. 104:4), yet power is certainly given them, upon occasion at least, to become visible in the likeness of human form. Likewise, evil spiritual beings seem evidently to possess a similar power.¹⁰

B. J. Oropeza also makes an inference that proceeds from having first concluded something about angels: 'By nature, then, demons are supernatural beings like angels, so we would expect them to have the same attributes as other angels.'¹¹ The highly influential systematic theologian Wayne A. Grudem begins his chapter on demonology by noting that the 'previous chapter [on angels] leads naturally to a consideration of Satan and demons, since they are evil angels who once were like the good angels but who sinned and lost their privilege of serving God.'¹² It would seem, then, that in order to understand the demon one must first come to understand the angel. While it is traditionally held that angels and demons do in fact share a common nature – that demons *just are* angels but with a predisposition for vice over virtue¹³ – I think that there is a significant factor that upsets and impedes our ability to discern that nature. Consider that, at least on a realist view of angelology, angels are intelligent agents working and

¹⁰ Merrill F. Unger, *Biblical Demonology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1994), p. 64.

¹¹ B. J. Oropeza, *99 Answers to Questions about Angels, Demons & Spiritual Warfare* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), p. 55.

¹² Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), p. 412.

¹³ I will further address this doctrine and its solidarity with the divines of the mainstream church in Chapter 2. Here, I simply want to note up front that I am predicating this on the assumption of a realist view of such beings.

ministering on behalf of God and at the behest of God's divine will. And if that is so, then angels could be said to be given the equipment, so to speak, so as to perform their duties for God. In their deployments, God would simply equip them for their respective tasks in the same way God equipped certain saints of both the Old and New Testaments to perform miracles. The point is that angels do not act in isolation from God but are given their materialisation in the world directly by him just as we presume that a new-born baby does not clothe itself but is given her clothing by her parents. Given the unquestioned dependence of human beings on God for such tasks as miracles and post-mortem visits (if these occur), this makes the prospect of angels manifesting on their own an unlikely intrinsic property of angels. In other words, since the good angels work for God, there is no unadulterated way to demarcate where God's power ends and the angel's begins. And so we cannot presume to say that all acts of the angels are not acts empowered by God.

What is true of other created spirits is true of demons. Thus, I submit that a focus on the demons allows our investigation to be free of wondering where God's power ends and the demons' begins for, presumably, God neither empowers them nor endorses their activity. We can thus appreciate more what such numinous creatures would be like. But such a study requires us to first understand what demons are, and this in turn raises a serious problem. In the next section, I shall explain just what that problem is and why it is important that there be a solution to that problem.

1.2 An Overview of the Problem

The problem of understanding the nature of demons is not anything like attempting to explain the origin of consciousness in human beings. It goes without saying that when it comes to human anthropology, materialism is in vogue in contemporary philosophy of mind. This is by and large due to materialists failing to find any adequate reasons for grounding human consciousness in a soul which, they feel, offers no explanatory input. After all, our physical bodies are obviously part of our existences and so it must at least be initially considered as being *part* of the explanation of human consciousness if not the complete explanation itself. As the existence of the soul cannot be established empirically, it has to be established through argument and inference, and because these means enjoy less privilege today than in the past, the existence of the soul is often considered to be a viable explanation only if materialism fails. And neither is the Bible of all things straightforward about whether there are such things as *human* souls in any of the senses that philosophers use that term. The Bible was not written with either the dualism or physical monism of the philosophers in mind, even if it tacitly endorses one or the other. Thus, the Bible leaves open the possibility that human souls may or may not exist in the way Platonists, Aristotelians, Cartesians, and others imagine.

One cannot say the same about demons for precisely the opposite is true. This is to say that the Bible affirms that demons are unembodied spirits and one must determine whether that spiritual nature has a material component or not. Even mainstream Christian philosophers who are anthropological materialists believe the Bible is clear about their being such things as *nonphysical persons*. For example, Peter van Inwagen, Kevin Corcoran, Nancey Murphy, Trenton Merricks, and Lynne Rudder Baker claim that human beings do not have a separable

immaterial soul,¹⁴ but their denial of a human soul does not translate into a wholesale denial that there are no souls whatsoever. In point of fact, these same philosophers directly acknowledge that God, the angels, and/or the demons are real existents and are themselves immaterial souls of some sort residing in a non-material realm.¹⁵ This leaves the Christian materialist, along with the Christian dualist, in a shared conundrum from which to give a full and coherent portrait of the metaphysics of demons consonant with the unimpeachable tenets of revelation. In short, investigators lack the benefit of the first-person awareness that it is a material constitution that is in some sense responsible for the consciousness of demons. There is no neurophysiology of the demons that makes it probable that consciousness may supervene on the demons' brain states for they have no brains! So the materialist's dictum that she freely applies to anthropology, viz. that the material constitution is the place to start thinking about how consciousness arises before moving to the postulation of a soul, cannot apply to demonology. That approach is unavailable to us. But if demons are souls and souls are construed as immaterial things, other tenets of revelation further complicate the investigation. The Bible, indeed, intimates that demons are souls but it also intimates that they are causally active in this physical world. As such, they are thought to have, at least on occasion, *physical*

¹⁴ Peter van Inwagen, *Material Beings* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990); Kevin Corcoran, *Rethinking Human Nature: A Christian Materialist Alternative to the Soul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006); Nancey Murphy, *Bodies and Souls, or Spirited Bodies?* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Trenton Merricks, 'How to Live Forever without Saving your Soul: Physicalism and Immortality', *Soul, Body, and Survival*, ed. by Kevin Corcoran (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001); Lynne Rudder Baker, *Persons and Bodies: A Constitution View* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

¹⁵ Peter van Inwagen, 'A Materialist Ontology of the Human Person', *Persons: Human and Divine*, ed. by Peter van Inwagen and Dean Zimmerman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 206; Kevin Corcoran, 'Human Persons are Material Only', *Debating Christian Theism*, ed. by J. P. Moreland, Chad Meister, and Khaldoun A. Sweis (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 273; Murphy, *Bodies and Souls*, pp. 23ff; Trenton Merricks, 'The Resurrection of the Body', *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology*, ed. by Thomas P. Flint and Michael C. Rea (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 485; Baker, *Persons and Bodies*, p. 92.

properties like location, extension, and the ability to act upon physical objects and organisms.¹⁶

How can this be if they are immaterial?

Now, history is filled with philosophers who have attempted to reconcile this apparent metaphysical inconsistency (at least insofar as ‘immaterial’ minimally implies the total deprivation of any physical properties whatsoever). But, tragically, the conclusions drawn by theologians and philosophers have been either self-contradictory or in tension with the views propounded by other esteemed representatives. Self-contradictory in the sense that one will *say* demons are immaterial but then proceed to ascribe to them physical properties nonetheless; and in tension with others insofar as one philosopher will affirm the demons’ immateriality but then another authority of equal weight will affirm their materiality. This is true not only of demons in particular but of angels in general and so is a wider problem than just demonology. Intermediary beings, as understood by all of the Abrahamic faiths (viz. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) and even by ancient philosophers, is a phrase that pertains to both angels and demons and supposes that they are hierarchically situated in some way between God and human beings.¹⁷ Such creatures are thought to be non-physical, mental subjects possessing some higher level of intelligence. They are also a part of God’s creation and are not paired with any material body or object.

¹⁶ Churchland, in referring to what a spirit would theoretically be like, supposes that it would be a ‘ghost [that] is a spiritual substance, quite unlike physical matter in its internal constitution, but fully possessed of spatial properties even so’. Paul M. Churchland, *Matter and Consciousness: A Contemporary Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013), p. 15.

¹⁷ This seems to be the interpretation Iamblichus, among other Neoplatonists, nurtured (see John M. Dillon, *Iamblichus Chalcidensis* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973), pp. 49-51). However, such a view may actually be in defiance of proper New Testament Christology given I Timothy 2.5 which reports that ‘there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.’ So defined, what place, then, for an angel? In the places where I employ the phrase *intermediary being* I am *not* using it in this way; rather, I am using it to express the *functional* and *accidental* status of beings said to occupy (in some sense) the otherworldly stage shared by God and departed saints – that they ‘go between’ the living human and the divine (or the adversary, as in the case of demons).

But this only exacerbates the problem. Intermediary beings are thought to, at least on occasion, interact with the physical world according to mainstream interpretations of biblical history. Sometimes their abilities to interact are expressed with vivid physical detail, including eating, drinking, and sleeping as suggested by Genesis 18.1-5.¹⁸ The passage reads:

And the LORD appeared to [Abram] by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing in front of him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth and said, "O Lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant. Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree, while I bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on--since you have come to your servant." So they said, "Do as you have said."

How can immaterial beings be hungry, thirsty, and tired? Obviously immaterial beings do not *naturally* have the ability to interact with material objects since souls and physical objects are entirely different, incongruous substances. God, as an unembodied soul, can overcome such incongruity because he is all-powerful and, so, is able to do the extraordinary, namely, to

¹⁸ Even if one of the visitors is God himself, the remaining two visitors are explicitly identified as angels in 19.1. For further analysis and confirmation, see Kenneth A. Matthews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2005), p. 216 and Robert Alter, *Genesis* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996), p. 77.

become embodied. This surely explains *one* of the men here in Genesis 18. And human beings, if they are composites of body and soul, would have an ability to interact because God paired their souls with their bodies. However, intermediary beings, or angels, are neither omnipotent nor paired with bodies; hence the question: how do they then interact with the world? We might say that God embodies the angels for such ephemeral tasks on earth. But what accounts for *demonic* interactions if those indeed occur? Demons do not- indeed *cannot* – call upon God for similar assistance. They are on their own. Perhaps the answer to this is just as mysterious as the question. Maybe it is the case that angels and demons are simply engineered by God *at their initial creation* with a mysterious matter-interacting power. It is presumed that because such beings were created as superior to human beings then it is unsurprising that such beings might be capable of extraordinary, supernatural feats in human history. But is this not just a convenient presumption on our part? Is this not to impart to demons certain inexplicable magical abilities of which we lack warrant to believe? Do we even *need* to presume that this is what they can do, viz. that there *are* such interactions between the demons and the physical world? In the introduction to his classic novel, *The Screwtape Letters*, C. S. Lewis reflects on the common errors committed by society in general when it comes to demonology:

There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest

in them. They themselves are equally pleased with both errors
and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight.¹⁹

That one could deny the existence of demons altogether (Lewis' 'materialist') of course eliminates the aforementioned metaphysical tensions but at a significant cost to belief in demons. For those who believe in demons and are unwilling to embrace such a cost, one must also steer clear of an interpretation of the demons that involves partnering with them. This practitioner (Lewis' 'magician'), so to speak, is no doubt willing to assign extravagant powers to demons and, so, buys her realism at an equally unacceptable cost. Perhaps we can refer to this error as the 'magical powers hypothesis' in its inflation of the supernatural powers of demons.

Unfortunately, the Christian church has not engaged in a thoroughgoing philosophical investigation into these problems, much less offered any metaphysical solution that is free from all of these challenges. There may not be any singular reason for such paltry investigation, but in some cases it most assuredly includes an uncritical acceptance of ecclesiastical teachings as pronouncements *ex cathedra*. I say this, not because the various representatives have been careless in every case in which they have written, but because they do not realise what is at stake if one is going to take the existence of demons seriously. And by offering up the explanations of the proponent of the magical powers hypothesis, one does not solve the problem but fancifully covers it up. The perception is that any alleged complications pertaining to such beings would vanish since the problem applies to an ethereal realm thought to be

¹⁹ C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), p. ix.

beyond logic's reach.²⁰ However, such a resolution will undoubtedly come across as unsatisfying to most for it amounts to nothing more than a mere article of faith designed to *overlook* the problem. Thus, for the serious philosopher of religion who wants to avoid unnecessary (and perhaps incoherent) magical speculations, and who values the virtues of what constitutes a good explanation without being dismissive, how demons interact with the world remains an irritating philosophical problem for which no solution has been forthcoming. My ultimate goal in this thesis is to elucidate just such a solution. I shall ultimately explain what that is and then argue for why it remains faithful to avoid the magical powers interpretation of demonology and does not unnecessarily go beyond what the biblical evidence warrants. I shall thus spell out in the next section a rough sketch of my solution.

1.3 The Solution

In aiming for a resolution to the problem so defined, I will begin by surveying important contributions to the metaphysics of intermediary beings in general and of demons in particular in Christianity's past and present. This survey shall bring to light the problem of the metaphysics of demons, thus prompting a solution. Therein we shall see that believers in demons past and present, when it comes to describing the ontology of the demons, have

²⁰ Some religious traditions, particularly within Christianity, have often said as much with respect to the divine attributes. For example, many theologians of a Reformed persuasion are content to affirm human free will while affirming a doctrine of divine sovereignty that seems to logically conflict with that reality (e.g. John Calvin, *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will: A Defence of the Orthodox Doctrine of Human Choice Against Pighius*, tr. by G. I. Davies, ed. by A. N. S. Lane (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002)). Their response is often to affirm some form of compatibilism (see Calvin, *ibid.*, pp. 69-70); and without the aid of any philosophical reflection they are content to relegate any logical contradictions to the inscrutability of God's providence. This is not to say that some have not attempted a philosophical solution (e.g. see Paul Helm, *The Providence of God*, *Contours of Christian Theology* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1993)), but that many within the tradition are simply satisfied with the tension between doctrines – satisfied in merely affirming the dismissive wisdom that 'God is in control' and that 'with God all things are possible.'

endorsed one of three positions: that demons are material, purely immaterial, or quasi-material. By *quasi-material* I mean to designate the idea that though intermediary beings may not be purely physical bodies like human bodies are (viz. material) or completely immaterial like God's ontology (viz. purely immaterial), they nonetheless are composed of a finer material composition akin to that of air and water vapour.²¹ 'Quasi-material' is meant to emphasise to the reader that, despite being spiritual, some form of matter is being incorporated into the ontology of such beings.

In offering a solution, I shall side with the pure immaterialists whose ontology, I submit, accounts for all of the available data better than materialist and quasi-materialist views. But if that theory is going to be defended, the pure immaterialist will have to account for the demons' role in their reported activities in the world. Yet, rather than defaulting to the mysterious view that demons simply are or have been empowered by God in such a way (viz. the magical powers hypothesis), I will argue that there is a better way to preserve the pure immateriality of the demons *and* explain all of the data regarding the demons' putative interactions with this world. I will argue that there are certain facts about the biblical descriptions of demons that make positing the magical powers hypothesis extraneous. Moreover, much of what precipitates the felt need to posit such power for the demons stems from a misunderstanding of the biblical data and a failure to see that a soul's basic power to communicate with another soul can better account for all of their activities in the world. I thereby refer to my hypothesis as *psychodynamic immaterialism*. By this designation, I am

²¹ I could have used other designations such as *quasi-spiritual*, *semi-spiritual*, *semi-physical*, and the like but all of these are essentially capturing the same notion, viz. that there exist beings whose ontology is strictly monistic yet somehow is a blend of both the physical and spiritual.

affirming that demons are purely immaterial and that they interact with the physical world exclusively through their cognitive interaction with human beings.

In the next section, I shall outline the approach I am taking in this thesis to establish both the problem of the metaphysics of demons and the solution I am offering. The outline consists of the ordering of the chapters and a brief summary as to what each one is about. To this we now turn.

1.4 A Chapter Outline of This Thesis

In this work I will explicate and defend a philosophy of demonology that (i) solves a real metaphysical problem involving the metaphysics of demons, (ii) offers a means of explaining how demons interact with the physical world that is contrary to the usual notion that demons just directly interact with the world inexplicably, and (iii) best accords with all of the core data we have on the demons. I shall begin by discussing in chapter 2 how earlier Christian philosophers (some of whom were also theologians) have bequeathed to the modern philosopher the aforementioned metaphysical problems associated with attempts at concocting a doctrine of demonic immaterialism that successfully integrates their reported interaction with the world.

In that chapter, I shall thus survey the history of Christian philosophy regarding those who have commented on and shaped Christian demonology. As the subject matter is vast, I have selected a representative sample of some of the most influential philosophers who have shaped the competing views in demonology's philosophical history. Chapter 2 begins by tracing Christian demonology back to the ancient Greeks and Jews and shows how their perspectives

did and did not influence the development of New Testament demonology. I then proceed to discuss the earliest Christian philosophers who wrote on the subject leading up to the medieval thinkers. I then proceed with a survey of Augustine and other influential medieval philosophers. It is in later medieval thinking that the notion of pure immaterialism really takes root. Its most influential catalyst is arguably Thomas Aquinas, but his assertion of pure immaterialism is preceded by Pseudo-Dionysius. But with no clear victor, all three hypotheses – namely that demons are material, quasi-material, or purely immaterial – found able defenders going into the modern and contemporary periods. Accordingly, I survey some of those representative Christian philosophers of these periods to show that there is an increasing dominance in the notion of pure immaterialism. Along with such dominance comes the ongoing acknowledgment that demons also have the special ability to interact with matter – a property of demons that seems to go unchallenged.

In Chapter 3, I will present a theory that consolidates two metaphysical features: first, that the ontology of demons is such that they are purely immaterial creatures and, second, that they, apart from any other talents they may possess, interact with this world only through their ability to cognitively communicate with the souls of human beings. The first feature goes beyond a sort of vague immaterialism – that immaterial beings, though bodiless, may still possess subtle, material properties imperceptible to percipients. For nearly a millennium and a half, it was believed by many philosophers that even an ethereal and/or aerial substance could still be considered incorporeal.²² This sort of quasi-materialism is attractive in the sense that it explains how demons can be both immaterial and causally interactive with the physical world.

²² I.e., Aquinas, *De Malo* XVI. I, Replies 1-4.

However, I will insist that their immaterialism is *pure* in the sense that they are not only bodiless but that they lack any material composition whatsoever, whether it be that of an aerial or ethereal substratum. The substance of the demons would be the same kind of substance as that of God. Hence, the first feature of my theory is that demons are purely immaterial, in the sense just outlined. I refer to the second feature – their means of interacting with the world – as *exclusive cognitive interaction*. By *cognitive* I am referring to the mind. By *interaction* I am *not* referring to the traditional interaction between mind and body as it is used in anthropological (substance) dualism, but something else, viz. the interaction of the demon's mind with the mind of a human person – a person in possession of a body. Exclusive cognitive interaction, as it is being used herein, means that when demons wish to cause events in the world, they can accomplish such activity only through human beings serving as proxies. Since if the demons are purely immaterial, then they do not have the natural ability to interact with physical objects on their own as, say, air can. But if demons wish to interact with the world, their only means to do so would be to use human beings as vehicles through which to act. I call the overall theory comprised of both of these distinct features (pure immaterialism and the exclusivity of cognitive interaction) *psychodynamic immaterialism*. In chapter 3, I shall elucidate each of these features in more detail and show how they are to be fully understood.

In Chapter 4, I shall focus on the claim that the notion of a purely immaterial person might not be logically or metaphysically coherent. Indeed, many have supposed the notion of a purely immaterial person to be incoherent. Yet I shall argue that such a notion is both logically and metaphysically coherent and contains no *a priori* improbability relative to any other ontology one might posit of demons. One can conceivably be a person and possess all of the

necessary attributes as to what would make one a person without having to commit to one kind of ontology over another. The purpose of the chapter is not to settle on which ontology is *likely* but how the ontology I propose is *possible*. I will thus argue that being purely immaterial is no less a possibility than, say, being purely material. This will remove any basis for supposing that demons must be material or quasi-material.

Chapter 5 consists of a positive case for the pure immateriality of the demons. Building on my defence of this as a mere possibility, I here offer an explanatory argument that is predicated on specific pieces of evidence that, when taken together, constitute a cumulative argument for supposing that pure immaterialism is the best explanation of the demons' ontology. In Chapter 6, I handle both philosophical and theological objections to this conclusion. I respond to each to show that none of them give us any good reasons to deny the pure immaterialism of the demons.

In Chapter 7, I shift the focus to the logical and metaphysical possibility of the demons causally interacting with other souls, regardless of whether or not those souls are embodied. I argue against Jaegwon Kim's complaint that purely immaterial souls would be causally effete. I then provide some positive support for why one can expect that demons in particular can and perhaps do interact with other souls as evidenced by other accepted notions of soul-soul interaction. I end this chapter by discussing the possibility of the demons having another kind of interactive ability, namely a *psychokinetic* ability. This, of course, is the magical powers hypothesis referred to earlier, which holds that demons may have the power to interact with the world by directly manipulating physical objects and forces. As such, it represents the traditional view of Christian demonology and is, accordingly, the rival theory to my own.

In Chapter 8, I offer up a cumulative case for supposing that the demons probably interact with the world only through cognitive interaction with human souls. This is to say that we have no good reason to affirm that demons have the additional power of psychokinesis. I present an explanatory argument that shows that exclusive cognitive interaction is the best interpretation of the demons' ability to interact with the physical world. In Chapter 9, I handle both philosophical and theological objections to this conclusion. I respond to each to show that none of them gives us any good reasons to deny the theory that demons interact with this world exclusively via their cognitive interaction with human beings.

Chapter 10 concludes the thesis by summarising the cases that have been made in favour of psychodynamic immaterialism. I then discuss future areas of potential research that can be addressed given this philosophy of demonology. I propose that various areas of thought are impacted by the conclusions derived in this work and so precipitate further discussions in those areas.

In the next Chapter, I shall begin by addressing the lack of a coherent demonology as offered by pre-Christian sources and subsequent Christian philosophers. The views of the latter, as will be shown, were largely shaped by ancient Greek and Jewish views of demons. But the differing views do not seem consistent and seem to traffic in ambiguity over what a 'spirit' is. And so we have the beginning of why a coherent philosophical theory for demonology is long overdue.

CHAPTER 2

METAPHYSICAL INTERPRETATIONS OF DEMONOLOGY IN CHRISTIAN HISTORY

2.1 Introduction

For mainstream, conservative Christians¹, the presence of the demonic is not only something that is *possible* but something that is real and active in human history. Demons figure prominently in the Christian corpus of the New Testament as the architects of villainy behind the opponents of Jesus, Christianity's founder, and his ministry. His subduing and expulsion of such beings provides a dramatic theological illustration of Jesus' authority over otherworldly forces. But before the epic tales of demonic enmity were cast in the canons of the New Testament, belief in demons actually saturated the neighbouring religious and non-religious cultures of antiquity. Of present interest is not only a sampling of the Christian church's testament to such entities but also of the metaphysical influences of the Jewish canons and the secular sources of Greek philosophers.

Subsequent to these influences, we find the ongoing Christian tradition integrating such views into its theology. As a consequence, philosophical and theological work in demonology precipitates metaphysical confusion. I contend that a historical survey of the metaphysical demonologies of the ancient, medieval, modern, and contemporary periods that have all

¹ Strictly speaking, a *conservative* Christian is typically one who is 'committed to certain historic formularies' (Ian Markham, 'Trends and Directions in Contemporary Theology: Anglican Theology', *The Expository Times*, 122 (2011), p. 210) like creeds which substantively include, though not necessarily entail, doctrines like 'the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible, the deity and virgin birth of Jesus, the substitutionary and atoning role of Jesus, and his physical resurrection and personal bodily return to the earth' (Leslie Smith, 'What's In a Name? Scholarship and the Pathology of Conservative Protestantism', *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, 20 (2008), p. 192). Specifically, regarding biblical passages on the level of historical and literary character, such reports are to be taken as straightforward descriptions of actual states of affairs – supernatural events or otherwise.

helped shape demonological metaphysics exhibits a set of self-contradictions and entrenched disagreements. In other words, speculations about the nature and activity of demons seem to be inconsistent (sometimes with one's *own* thoughts on the matter), untenable, or haphazardly derived. This is so because (Christian) philosophers may have preferred to merely *accommodate* certain phenomena and scripture rather than to *ascertain* from the phenomena and scripture a coherent and consistent metaphysic. Their limited objective leaves Christian demonology in disarray.

In this chapter I shall explore the development of the historical, metaphysical concepts of demons without belabouring what has already been extensively addressed in the existing literature.² So this ancestral exploration will be specific to Christian demonology's metaphysical taxonomy. I shall begin by highlighting those conceptions posed by the ancient world of both the Greek philosophers and the religious Jews. Following this, I shall explore subsequent Christian demonologies offered by its more partisan philosophers from the Church Fathers to the present day. It will be apparent that the speculations of the early, pre-modern, and modern Christian thinkers on the subject of demonology continued to be metaphysically confusing at best and *prima facie* self-contradictory at worst. If Christians want to take the metaphysics of the demonic realm seriously, and so recapture a coherent but systematised philosophy of demonology within a conservative context, then they will need to amend or transcend the interpretive theories posed by these predecessors. Christians must opt for a new theory that can at least accord with the sacred writings of the Old and New Testaments along with our

² I must express my indebtedness to the works of Everett Ferguson and Jeffrey Burton Russell for their written work in offering a thorough analysis of Christian demonology and its background influences.

relevant philosophical predilections. To begin illustrating the problem, I shall begin by surveying the pre-Christian landscape.

2.2 Early Greek Views of Demonological Metaphysics

Many of the ancient Greek philosophers are known for positing an animating substance – a soul (*psuchê*) – that resides in human beings and animals that can survive the death of the body. Similarly, the soul likewise constitutes the monistic ontologies of divine beings (viz. gods) in that they are *unembodied*. Concerning the genesis of views regarding the nature of the soul, it was common for pre-Socratic philosophers to think of the soul as a quasi-material, polymorphous substance that was (normally) imperceptible to bodily senses. This primal substance was, according to some of its most well-known pre-Socratic proponents (i.e. Anaximander, Anaximenes, Anaxagoras, Archelaus, and Diogenes of Apollonia), ‘air’ (*aer*).³ Such an aerial constitution was considered to be a reasonable fit since it explains how the soul could be inside the body, present throughout the body (or, in the case of unembodied souls, spatial), and invisible.⁴ Moreover, upon the death of any human person, ‘the soul aspires to the [ether], which is fiery air, whereas the body, because of its telluric nature, rejoins the earth.’⁵ Though the soul was not understood to be a material substance in the sense of being corporeal and (*ceteris paribus*) susceptible to the senses, it was understood to be a quasi-material

³ I.e. Anaximenes is reported to have said that ‘our soul, being air, holds us together, so do breath and air encompass the whole world’ (Aetius, Fragment 2); Diogenes says that ‘[h]umans and all other animals live upon air by breathing it, and this is their soul and their intelligence’ and that ‘the soul of all living things is the same, namely, air warmer than that outside us and in which we are, but much colder than that near the sun’ (Fragments 4-5).

⁴ Barry Sandywell, *Presocratic Reflexivity: The Construction of Philosophical Discourse c. 600-450 B.C.*, *Logological Investigations*, III (New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 182.

⁵ Adrian Mihai, ‘Soul’s Aitherial Abode According to the Poteidaia Epitaph and the Presocratic Philosophers’, *Numen: International Review for the History of Religions*, 57 (2010), p. 558.

substance of a higher, divine order that could still interact and intermix with the corporeal world – an ontic distinction that appears to be one merely of degree.⁶ Perceptive of the awkward implications here, Frederick Copleston has pointed out: ‘the antithesis between spirit and matter had not yet been grasped’ by the pre-Socratics and so ‘they were not fully conscious of the distinction, or at least did not realise its implications.’⁷ Nonetheless, the ontic substances of both divine and earthly souls are surely comprised of air. Accordingly, specific things like demons would likewise be aerial beings.

Now the concept of *demon* (from the Greek *daimon*, *daimonion*, *daimoniou*) had undergone a period of evolution within the wider, thinking cultures of antiquity. In some narrower cases it was overlaid with religious motives and in others it was merely conforming to the conventional wisdom of the time. It is tempting for moderns to consider such talk of *daimonion* as the religious device for handling the sinister aspect(s) of creation,⁸ or perhaps as a convenient nomenclature for clever stories of superstition bent on explaining the seemingly unexplainable.⁹ But these would not be the views of the intellectually-driven cultures of the time in that they are replete with discussions about intermediary beings as concretely existing, supernatural agents. It is also equally wrong and historically naïve to suppose that the *daimon* was consistently understood to be merely an agent *of evil* or the mere villain of a supernatural

⁶ Aristotle wrote that air was a substance that could be used to reflect light under the right conditions: ‘Sight is reflected from all smooth surfaces, such as are air and water among others. Air must be condensed if it is to act as a mirror, though it often gives a reflection even uncondensed when the sight is weak’ (Aristotle, *Meteorologica*, III. 4. 373^b1, trans. by E. W. Webster, *Complete Works of Aristotle, Volume 1: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. by Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), Bollingen series ; 71:2, p. 601). This, Aristotle goes on to say, is what explains how someone may mistakenly see an apparition that turns out to be a reflection of himself.

⁷ Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, I (New York: Doubleday, 1993), p. 20.

⁸ I.e. Elaine Pagels, *The Origin of Satan: How Christians Demonized Jews, Pagans, and Heretics* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).

⁹ I.e. David Friedrich Strauss, *Das Leben Jesu* (Tubingen: Verlag von C. F. Osiander, 1836), pp. 21-52.

hero story. As far as the intellectual representatives of ancient Greece were concerned, the *daimon* was a variegated referent for a divine or superhuman power or activity, and it possessed none of the negative or evil associations which it has for later thought.¹⁰

Everett Ferguson discusses in his important study on Christian demonology and its Greek ideological backdrop how ‘demons’, so understood, was a multifaceted referent for gods, agents of destiny, deceased souls, intermediary messengers, and divine guardians.¹¹ In the context of *daimonion* as a referent for ‘god’, such a designation was used to refer loosely to a god either when the identity of the god was unknown or if one were emphasising the general supernatural power coming into expression on a particular occasion.¹² It was common for *daimonion* to refer to something’s being ‘heaven-sent’, when one did not know what caused some wondrous power or event for which god may have been responsible. The invoking of *daimonion* would be used to reflect the generic notions of fortune, luck, or chance – something divine but imprecise nonetheless. It is therefore unsurprising that a variant, *daimoniou*, would also come to describe fate and sovereign destiny, which could be bad or good depending upon the context. As for demons being heroic souls in some sense, Plato’s *Republic* makes mention of the ‘greatest, finest, and first of laws’ which are described as the laws ‘having to do with the establishing of temples, sacrifices, and other forms of service to gods, daemons [*daimonon*], and heroes, [...]’.¹³

¹⁰ Everett Ferguson, *Demonology of the Early Christian World* (Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen Press, 1984), p. 36. Perhaps Aristotle’s use of *eudaimonia* (often translated simply as ‘happiness’) is iconic evidence of the benign use of *daimon* amongst the Greeks.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., pp. 37-38.

¹³ Plato, *The Republic* IV. 427b, translated from *Plato: Complete Works*, trans. by G. M. A. Grube and C. D. C. Reeve, ed. by John M. Cooper (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1997), p. 144.

It is apparent that Hesiod (circa 750-650 B.C.), among many others, understood demons to be the proper designation of disembodied *human* souls, a fairly common Greek notion during this time.¹⁴ For Hesiod in particular, demons figured as the classification of a deceased race. According to Hesiod himself, this deceased race is a 'golden race of men' who lived without any suffering.¹⁵ That Christian writers in the second century made frequent mention of demons as the souls of the departed would not be without precedent in the ancient Greek world as evidenced here. Such is a testament to Hesiod's influence.

For Socrates (circa 470 – 399 B.C.), it was not uncommon for him to speak of a personal *daimon* that would influence his behaviour. For him, it was a sort of negative voice restraining him from doing certain actions.¹⁶ This is a theme picked up by his student Plato (circa 427/428 – 348/347 B.C.) who goes so far as to suggest that every person *chooses* his own demon: 'your daemon or guardian spirit will not be assigned to you by lot; you will choose him.'¹⁷ Early Stoic philosophers adhered to the idea that demons were supervisory spirits that might also serve as individual consciences for each person to tap.

¹⁴ Ferguson, *Demonology*, p. 41.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 40. Hesiod says that 'they are called pure spirits [*daimones*; 'demons'] dwelling on the earth and are kindly, delivering from harm, and guardians of mortal men; for they roam everywhere over the earth, clothed in mist and keep watch on judgements and cruel deeds, givers of wealth; for this royal right also they received'. Hesiod, *Works and Days* II. 121-139, translated from *Works and Days, Theogony and The Shield of Heracles*, trans. by Hugh G. Evelyn-White (NY: Dover Publications, 2006), p. 6). Hesiod also writes, 'And Eos bare to Tithonus brazen-crested Memnon, king of the Ethiopians, and the Lord Emathion. And to Cephalus she bare a splendid son, strong Phaethon, a man like the gods, whom, when he was a young boy in the tender flower of glorious youth with childish thoughts, laughter-loving Aphrodite seized and caught up and made a keeper of her shrine by night, a divine spirit [viz. 'demon']'. *Theogony* II. 984-991, *ibid.*, p. 54. Based on these, Hesiod's association of the demons with the souls of the deceased is apparent.

¹⁶ See Plato, *Thaetetus* 151a; *Apology* 24c, 40a. Plutarch has written on Socrates' demon (Plutarch, 'A Discourse Concerning Socrates's Daemon', *Morals*, trans. by William W. Goodwin, *Plutarch's Morals*, II (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1905), pp. 378ff; also see Ferguson, *Demonology*, p. 43. Merrill F. Unger notes how some have interpreted Socrates' *daimonion* to be merely the personification of the voice of God or conscience (see his *Biblical Demonology: A Study of Spiritual Forces at Work Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1994), n. 40 on p. 57), something that seems captured in Plato's *Timaeus* (e.g. 90a-90c).

¹⁷ Plato, *Republic* X. 617d, *Plato: Complete Works*, p. 1220; cf., Ferguson, *Demonology*, p. 43.

It was also acknowledged by Plato that the demons were beings whose nature was in some sense a hybrid between the gods and man – a sort of intermediary ontology.¹⁸ This notion would come to influence subsequent demonologies, particularly those within the Hellenistic and Christian traditions, for numerous centuries to follow. For Plato, the very nature of demons would be somewhat of a hybrid between an upper and lower class of being (something like Heracles was as the offspring of Zeus and a mortal). They also served as *messengers* between distinct parties (something like Hermes, a messenger and emissary of the gods) akin to the role typically assigned in the Jewish scriptures (e.g. the Old Testament) to the *mal'akim* (Hebrew for 'angels')¹⁹ and in the Christian Greek scriptures (the New Testament) to the *aggeloi* (Greek for 'angels').²⁰ This is to say that there are intermediary beings or envoys commuting between the divine and human realms in order to communicate and carry out certain duties from God to man.²¹ Their nature, according to Plato, is a synthesis of divine and terrestrial substances rendering it possible for demonic intercourse between the two worlds. As such, they are substantially composed of something between body and spirit. As a

¹⁸ Plato writes: "What is [Eros] [...] Diotima?" "He's a great spirit, Socrates. Everything spiritual, you see, is in between god and mortal." "What is their function?" I asked. "They are messengers who shuttle back and forth between the two, conveying prayer and sacrifice from men to gods, while to men they bring commands from the gods and gifts in return for sacrifices. Being in the middle of the two, they round out the whole and bind fast the all to all. Through them all divination passes, through them the art of priests in sacrifice and ritual, in enchantment, prophecy, and sorcery. Gods do not mix with men; they mingle and converse with us through the spirits instead, whether we are awake or asleep. He who is wise in any of these ways is a man of the spirit, but he who is wise in any other way, in a profession or any manual work, is merely a mechanic. These spirits are many and various, then, and one of them is [Eros]"'. Plato, *Symposium* 202d-203a, translated from *Plato: Complete Works*, trans. by Alexander Nehemas and Paul Woodruff, p. 486).

¹⁹ Genesis 19; 28.12; 32.1; Psalm 78.49; 91.11; 103.20.

²⁰ Matthew 4.6, 11; 13.41; 24.31; Mark 1.13; 13.27; Luke 4.10; 16.22; Galatians 3.19; Hebrews 2.2, 7; 13.2; II Peter 2.11; Revelation 3.5; 7.2; 9.15; 12.7; 16.1; 17.1; 21.9.

²¹ There are some important distinctions worth noting. For example, the Greek concept of the intermediate regarding such beings is one of necessity because 'Gods do not mix with men' (see n. 18). As such, they were the necessary medium of any bidirectional commerce between mankind and God. The biblical concept does not describe such intermediaries as necessary but simply as unidirectional, *de facto* messengers from God to man.

consequence, it was thought that demons might conceal themselves behind iconic statues and images until such a time as they would infiltrate the human priests.²² Concerning their elevated status over human beings, Plato elsewhere explains that just as humans are superior to the oxen, 'Cronus, who was well-disposed to man [...] placed us in the care of the [demons], a superior order of beings.'²³

Others, such as Pythagoras (circa 570 – 495 B.C.), Xenocrates (circa 339/8 – 314/3 B.C.), and Chrysippus (circa 279 – 206 B.C.), also share a common demonology with Plato from which Plutarch (circa 46 – 120 A.D.) later systematises a demonology.²⁴ These intermediary beings are entities of the divine order even though they share in the nature of man's soul and surpass human nature. As a result, such demons possess 'perceptive faculties of the body [...] with a susceptibility to pleasure and pain' varying in 'degrees of virtue and vice.'²⁵ Grecian demonology eventually was developed to emphasise demonic actions as salient causes of sinister human actions as evidenced by the works of Plutarch (specifically his *Morals*) in reporting on Chrysippus and the later Stoics.²⁶ Plutarch elsewhere discusses the familiar phenomenon of demonic possession (or *demonisation* as it is sometimes referred).²⁷ That demons would inhabit humans and wreak havoc and insanity on them was an already-

²² See F. C. Conybeare, 'The Demonology of the New Testament I', *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, 8 (1896), p. 607.

²³ Plato, *Laws* IV. 713d, translated from *Plato: Complete Works*, trans. by Trevor J. Saunders, p. 1400.

²⁴ Plutarch writes: '[O]f certain grand Daemons, whom Plato, Pythagoras, Xenocrates, and Chrysippus (following herein the opinion of the most ancient theologians) affirm to be of greater strength than men, and to transcend our nature by much in power, but not to have a divine part pure and unmixed, but such as participates of both the soul's nature and the body's sensation, capable of receiving both pleasure and pain, and all the passions that attend these mutations, which disorder some of them more and others of them less. For there are divers degrees both of virtue and vice, as among men, so also among Daemons'. *Of Isis and Osiris* 25. 360d-e, translated from *Plutarch's Morals*, IV, trans. by William W. Goodwin (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1878), p. 86.

²⁵ See n. 24.

²⁶ *Dinner of Seven Wise Men* 7. 153a; *Stoic Contradictions* 37. 1051c; *Roman Questions* 51. 277a.

²⁷ *Life of Marcellus* 20. 5f.

established belief among these and earlier Greek representatives.²⁸ It is not surprising that belief in demonic possession led to efforts to the expulsion of demons by the use of magic.²⁹ Further evidence of higher demonology among the Greeks also comes from the Hermetic tradition.³⁰ According to an apt summary by Ferguson, '[w]e have thus reached elements of Greek thought which clearly are in the background of New Testament times and influenced Christian thinking in the post-biblical times.'³¹

Though there exist similarities between the demonological pneumatologies of the ancient Greek understanding and the Christian understanding with its New Testament backdrop, there are undoubtedly stark contrasts of thought – not the least of which is the construal of demons as deceased persons or as demigods working for God. But, given the variations of Greek thought on demons, one can only conclude that though demons were genuine, present personalities with a marked influence on human conscience, they were far from being captured by any consistent metaphysical description. Curiously, the Greek *daimonion* has more in common with the Catholic doctrine of the intercession and invocation of saints than with the wider Christian doctrine of angelology. As we will see in the Jewish and Christian portraits of demonology, the Greeks were not alone in their ambiguous understanding of this realm.

2.3 Early Jewish Views of Demonological Metaphysics

²⁸ See Euripides, *Hippolytus* 141ff.

²⁹ Ferguson, *Demonology*, p. 54.

³⁰ *Corpus Hermeticum* XVI. 10f.

³¹ Ferguson, *Demonology*, p. 51.

The Old Testament has very little to say concerning demons. The Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint, or LXX for short³²) utilises *daimoniois* for the Hebrew root *shed* ('devils') in only two places: Deuteronomy 32.17 and Psalm 106.37. And in both of these instances it seems that *shed* refers to pagan idols. It is unclear from the immediate context of those passages, however, whether the understanding of *unembodied, intermediary beings* is to be adopted as the nature of the power or identity behind the icons.³³ Isaiah 13.21 and 34.14 speak of the 'satyr' (Hebrew: *sa'iyir*; '[hairy] he-goat') and are both translated as *daimonia* in the LXX.³⁴ Therefore, as Merrill Unger suggests, 'Israelites considered these demonic conceptions to be goat-like in aspect or attributes' and that the Septuagint's use of *daimonia* is evidence that 'Alexandrian Jews considered them to be demons.'³⁵ It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that corrupt leaders and nonbelievers would later be allegorised as 'goats.'³⁶

The Old Testament term *šāṭān* means 'adversary' or 'accuser' and can refer either to a personal title for the chief of demons or as a mere temporary function of any personal agent.³⁷ We have only a handful of passages that utilise some form of *šāṭān* which could be interpreted either way. In I Chronicles 21.1 ('Then Satan stood up against Israel and moved David to

³² The Septuagint is often given the shorthand 'LXX' as an acknowledgment that it was translated by an estimated 70 scholars.

³³ Unger seems to think so (*Biblical Demonology*, pp. 59-60). On page 60, Unger points out that the Psalmist's statement that 'all the gods of the peoples are idols, But the LORD made the heavens' in Psalm 96.5 has '*eliyl* ('worthless,' 'good for nothing,' or 'idols') translated in the LXX as *daimonia*. This would seem to support Unger's overall conclusion that 'the demons behind them are the real existences' (p. 61) even if Psalm 106.37 or Deuteronomy 32.17 themselves do not. The same can be said about Isaiah 65.11: 'But you who forsake the LORD, Who forget My holy mountain, Who set a table for Fortune [*daimoni*; LXX], And who fill cups with mixed wine for Destiny [...]'

³⁴ Leviticus 17.7 and II Chronicles 11.15 mention the *sa'iyir* ('[hairy] he-goats') which some translations read as 'demons', but the LXX simply translates these as *mataiois* ('idols') instead of *daimonia*.

³⁵ Unger, *Biblical Demonology*, p. 60.

³⁶ See Daniel's discussion of *tsaphiyir* ('goat') as the envisioned eschatological King of Greece in Daniel 8 and Jesus's overt usage of 'young goats' (*eriphion*) for the inhospitable in Matthew 25.32-46 vis-à-vis the hospitable who are contrastingly represented as 'sheep.'

³⁷ Or *diabolos* in the LXX, which takes on the additional meaning of 'slanderer.'

number Israel'), we are given no information about the identity of this personal adversary. And the problem is further compounded in the parallel account of II Samuel 24.1 which states:

Now again the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and it [or
He] incited David against them to say, "Go, number Israel and
Judah."

This passage suggests that God is the ultimate agent behind David's numbering of Israel, which leaves the impression that the *śātān* of I Chronicles 21 is an agent of God. In Job 1-2, these chapters use the noun along with the definite article in describing the adversary (*haśśātān*, which means 'the satan'). Given the context of Job, the presence of the *śātān* before God, the manner in which the *śātān* interacts as a courtroom accuser, and the fact that the angelic hosts are with him in company (1.6; 2.1) suggest that the *śātān* is one of the angels merely carrying out his designated role.³⁸ There is no definitive indication that the *śātān* is himself an archenemy of God or the chief of demons, a notion that is well-developed in later demonological systems.³⁹ The closest passage to the *śātān*'s independence as an adversary to God who is not part of the angelic community can possibly be found in Zechariah 3.1-2:

Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the
angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse

³⁸ Numbers 22.22 designates the 'angel of the LORD' as *śātān* which might further suggest that *śātān* was more of a role than a proper name.

³⁹ Some have pointed to Isaiah 14.12-19 and Ezekiel 28.13-16 as prooftexts for the existence of Satan. But since these are disputed passages even amongst Jewish scholars, I do not appeal to them as testimony to the existence of Satan.

him. And the LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, O Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?"⁴⁰

At least by the first century A.D., Jews believed (and Jesus no less) that Satan had at one time been an angelic resident of heaven – the domain of God – out of which he was cast.⁴¹

The intertestamental literature is filled with examples of evil spirits (yet another designation of the demons) interacting with human beings. In fact, there are references to one of the offences of the demons as having sexual intercourse with human women – a reference based on the canonical writings cited in the Pseudepigrapha. In Genesis 6.1-4 we have an oft-cited story concerning a race of beings with the appellation ‘sons of God’ who are said to take the ‘daughters of men’ as wives and produce offspring as a result of their union. But it is surely awkward if not downright contradictory to the Jewish understanding that marriage and subsequent childbearing would not be considered consecrated practices. It also seems incommensurate with the Old Testament (as well as the New Testament)⁴² that the practices of

⁴⁰ If the *śātān* were merely role-playing as an accuser, it could be doubted that he would have been scathingly rebuked in the way described, but no definite conclusions can be drawn. As Marvin Tate notes: ‘Nevertheless, the usage of the verb is not sufficient to establish that ‘the *śātān*’ in Zech. 3:2 is the Devil, or even a devil figure, with implacable opposition to the will of God’. Marvin E. Tate, ‘Satan in the Old Testament’, *Review & Expositor*, 89 (1992), p. 464. Whatever one mines from the passages, by the time Judaism matured in the second century B.C., *śātān* eventually took on the attribute of being a personal appellation.

⁴¹ By the second century, there was already a fully developed demonology designating such beings as having ‘fallen’ from their original status. I make mention here specifically of Satan. For further discussion, see Alfred Marx, ‘La chute de “Lucifer” (Esaïe 14,12-15; Luc 10,18): Préhisteire d'un mythe’, *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses*, 80 (2000), pp. 171-185; Ronald F. Youngblood, ‘Fallen Star: The Evolution of Lucifer’, *Bible Review-Washington*, 14 (1998), pp. 22-31.

⁴² Cf. John 2.1-2.

men given in marriage would inevitably result in such widespread judgement.⁴³

Consequentially, Jews inevitably interpreted this passage as a reference, not to men, but to angels, viz. fallen angels (and/or demons). The Pseudepigraphal writings (specifically I Enoch), completed no later than the first century B.C., suggest that the sons of God of Genesis 6 were actually conspiring angels who were condemned for their wickedness and corruption through their unnatural unions with human women and their consequential offspring as physical ‘giants’ of a sort.⁴⁴ The author of I Enoch saw demons as being the spirits of the giants which resulted from the forbidden sexual intercourse between those angels and women.⁴⁵

Other stories, those not predicated on interpreting any portion of Torah or the broader Old Testament, are told about *specific* demons who villainously engage in human affairs. For example, in the book of Tobit, the demon Asmodeus is said to have interrupted the consummation of the marriages of Sarah (daughter of Raquel) on seven occasions by slaying the groomsmen. Asmodeus is said to have loved Sarah and so would not let anyone even approach her.⁴⁶ Parallels with stories about the Greek pantheon surely come to mind, and this is due to the obvious anthropomorphising of demons that seemingly occurs here.

Therefore, the unfolding of Jewish demonology seems to indicate that as we go from the earlier canonical writings to the later non-canonical commentaries on various canonical accounts and beyond, we see an evolving understanding of the demons that were later

⁴³ The passage goes on to emphatically declare this judgement that ultimately culminates in the story of Noah: ‘And the LORD said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them”’ (Genesis 6.7).

⁴⁴ See I Enoch 6.1-6; 15.8 – 16.2; 2 Enoch 18; 29.4f; Jubilees 11.5. The Hebrew term *n^epilîm* along with *gibbôrîm* in Genesis 6.4 is often translated as ‘the fallen ones – the giants.’ For more on the identity of the *n^epilîm*, see Chapter 6, Section 6.3, Passage #2.

⁴⁵ Ferguson, *Demonology*, p. 70.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

described in familiar terms as sinister spirits that would interact with humans in physical and personal ways (*how* this can be is never countenanced). But in the canonical works, demons tend to be described in ways that are not clarified, i.e. that they might be 'hairy goats', that they *may* have been involved with or are a result of the 'daughters of men', and that they are the concrete forces behind the idols of Israel's enemies. Even more elusive is the identity and role of Satan outside of the cryptic references of certain angels being described as *functional* adversaries. As such, there exists an obvious hermeneutical danger of retrojecting later interpretations onto previous passages from which no clear exegesis can manifest. There is no doubt, then, that the intrusion of the demonic in the material universe according to Jewish thinking is surely a pervasive feature. But it is the non-canonical writings that tend toward a portrayal of direct demonic interaction with human beings in order to explain such invasions. Yet given the power of angels to appear before and interact with human observers, perhaps the evil counterparts may be doing the same in their mating shenanigans with human women. The scriptural portions, left uncoloured by commentary, do not necessarily envisage a clear materialistic ontology for demonic beings (if the relevant passages even refer to such things as superhuman villainous realities) and so a thorough Jewish demonology seems to tend toward ambivalence. Moreover, there is no clear explanation as to how these demons go from being 'spirits' to creatures that are overtly physical and sensate. Let us now consider the Christian traditions which have further shaped demonology amongst the philosophers.

2.4 Early Christian Views of Demonological Metaphysics

During the period represented in the New Testament, the demonology of first century Palestine (shaped in part by both Jewish and Greek sources) is already a matured system that affirms an unspecified number of adversarial fallen angels called 'demons'. These sinister spirits roguishly influence the behaviour of human beings and are convivial with earthly governments and movements in some undisclosed way. As was believed at the time of Jesus, demons were responsible for social, moral, and even physical ills wrought upon individuals and nations under the supervision of Satan, their chief and leader in the struggle to oppose God and his creation. Satan and his demons seem to have become a kingdom of their own – a perfidious aggregate of spiritual beings forever bent on undermining the trajectory of God's plans. As the true agents behind the oppressive Egyptian, Sumerian, Persian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Seleucid, and Roman empires of times past and present, the demons are malicious creatures determined to destroy the ones created in the image of God, viz. human beings. Human beings are, thus, the privileged of creation to share in the fellowship of God at the eschatological restitution of earth and so are the prime targets of demonic oppression.

In contrast to the Old Testament, the New Testament is quite imbued with references to demons, Satan (or the Devil), and their active engagement with God and humanity. Matthew chapters 8-12 contain reports of demonic exorcisms performed by Jesus (and mirrored by both his followers as well as his admirers) followed by criticism of such by the detractors of his day. Mark and Luke are equally pregnant with intermittent discussions about Jesus's victory over demons and the kingdom of Satan. Satan himself plays a primary and intimate role in opposing Jesus, from his temptation in the wilderness⁴⁷ to his betrayal by Judas.⁴⁸ The Apostle Paul

⁴⁷ See Matthew 4.1-11 and Mark 1.12-13.

himself, having written most of the post-Gospels New Testament with some of his works ranking as the earliest to be produced, treats the Christian believer as though he were in a direct state of war with this satanic kingdom.⁴⁹ The Apostle John also discusses the role Satan has for both the present world (Revelation 2.13, 24) and the eschatological one to come (Revelation 12.9; 20.2, 7).⁵⁰ Consistent with that, the New Testament describes demons as spiritual beings, candidly calling them evil 'spirits'⁵¹ and identifying their (original) abode as otherworldly.⁵² The New Testament further describes the 'spirit' as something that is naturally understood to be incorporeal⁵³ and 'invisible.'⁵⁴ Jeffrey Burton Russell, religious studies scholar and historian of Christian demonology, offers a summary description of Satan as described in the New Testament:

The Devil of the New Testament is the prince of this world of space (*kosmos*) and time (*aiōn*), as opposed to Jesus Christ, whose kingdom is not of this world. To some extent, Satan is the lord of matter and flesh as opposed to spirit. [...] Satan is the prime adversary of Christ. He tried to tempt Christ but failed. He sought

⁴⁸ See Luke 22.3 and John 13.27.

⁴⁹ See Romans 16.20, II Corinthians 2.11, and Ephesians 6.11-20, just to name a few.

⁵⁰ The eschatological world of judgement has been interpreted to be either the generation of Jesus (precipitated by the destruction of the Jewish Temple in 70 A.D.) with the binding of Satan as a present reality or a later conflict merely foreshadowed by the destruction of the Temple that has not yet been realised.

⁵¹ See the consistent use of *pneuma* ('spirit') in describing the demons in Luke 7.21; 8.2; Acts 19.12-13, 15-16; 23.9.

⁵² See Luke 8.31; 10.18; Ephesians 6.12; Revelation 12.9.

⁵³ See Luke 24.39.

⁵⁴ Compare John 4.24's description of God as *pneuma* ('spirit') with I Timothy 1.17's affirmation that God is invisible. However, it seems implied in Luke 24.37 that spirits *could* be seen. But this can be explained by suggesting that visibility was divinely induced (cf. Matthew 17.1-9) and, so, not necessarily the inherent natural property of the spirit itself. Or, perhaps the disciples' expectation that a soul would be visible was just an understandable mistake on their part.

Christ's death, yet at the same time tried to avert the act of redemption. Following the death and ascension of Christ, the Devil tries to thwart the Lord's victory by attacking and perverting humanity. Satan tempts people; he causes illness and death. He obsesses and possesses individuals and tempts human beings to sin. He is the leader of a host of evil spirits. He and his followers will be defeated and punished by Christ at the end of the world.⁵⁵

Beyond that, continues Russell, the New Testament has 'left a great many questions of diabolology open to future theologians.'⁵⁶

We have already seen that both the antecedent Greek and Jewish views of demonology were often inconsistent in their descriptions of demons (advocating the 'spiritual' nature of demons while affirming their having various physical properties). We are about to see that the Christian views, beginning with the Church Fathers, were no different and that the following tide of Christian demonology itself engendered an equally confusing portrait. The Fathers seemed to acknowledge likewise the spiritual nature of the demons but ultimately their demonology also incorporated some aspect of physicality. Though such demonic creatures are consistently affirmed to be (fallen) angelic spirits, they have also been conspicuously described as beings that could be perceived. In the next section, we shall explore a sampling of some of the most influential Patristic thinkers regarding Christian demonology.

⁵⁵ Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Satan: The Early Christian Tradition* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981), p. 27.

⁵⁶ Russell, *Satan*, *ibid.*

2.5 Patristic Views of Demonological Metaphysics

Justin Martyr's (100 – 165 A.D.) view of demonology is central to his world view,⁵⁷ and according to Ferguson, it not only 'introduce[s] but also [outlines] much that is to be said about early Christian demonology.'⁵⁸ In *The Second Apology*, Justin's demonology is inaugurated by his affirmation that the demons just are 'evil spirits.'⁵⁹ His interpretation of Genesis 6 later in the same work supposes that these 'spirits' are not at all devoid of material properties. He says that the sons of God of Genesis 6 are fallen angels that 'were captivated by love of women, and begat children who are those that are called demons'.⁶⁰ The later Lactantius (circa 250 – 325 A.D.) shared this view thereby showing how pervasive and influential this understanding was.⁶¹ These deviant angels and their birthed demons went 'among man [and] sowed murders, wars, adulteries, intemperate deeds, and all wickedness'.⁶² A contemporary of Justin's, Athenagoras the Athenian (circa 133 – c. 190 A.D.), similarly affirmed that 'the souls of the giants [...] are the demons' and even adds that they 'are eager for the blood of the sacrifices [made to idols], and

⁵⁷ Leslie William Barnard, *Justin Martyr: His Life and Thought* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1967), p. 107.

⁵⁸ Ferguson, *Demonology*, p. 106. As an example, Athenagoras (c. 133-190) agrees with Justin and the matured Jewish demonology as described in I Enoch.

⁵⁹ Justin Martyr, *The Second Apology* I, translated from *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325 Volume I - The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, translated from Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and Arthur Cleveland Coxe (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1886), p. 188. Justin uses the phrase again in Chapters VII and XIII.

⁶⁰ Justin Martyr, *The Second Apology* V, *ibid.*, p. 190. This view is also shared by Lactantius (see his *The Divine Institutes* II. 15).

⁶¹ See Lactantius, *The Divine Institutes* II. 15 translated from Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and Arthur Cleveland Coxe, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume VII: Fathers of the Third and Fourth Century* (NY: C. Scribner's Sons, 1886), p. 64.

⁶² *Ibid.*

lick them.’⁶³ All of this seems to clash with the *prima facie* idea that the demons are spirit (*pneuma*). For the Greeks, that a *daimon* might be ‘spirit’ and (finely) material at the same time was not problematic. But in Christianity, God is also a ‘spirit’ (cf. John 4.24) and it has been customary to insist that God is devoid of *any* material constitution – fine or otherwise – whatsoever. So what is not problematic for the Greeks is very problematic for Christians. Also worthy of note is that, according to Justin, the demons are also capable of ‘effecting apparitions of themselves’ and so have ‘both defiled women and corrupted boys, and showed such fearful sights to men.’⁶⁴ They can variously appear ‘in dreams, and sometimes by magical impositions.’⁶⁵

Tatian the Assyrian (circa 120 – 180 A.D.), another contemporary of Justin Martyr, adds to Justin’s view that ‘none of the demons possess [*sic*] flesh; their structure is spiritual, like that of fire or air’.⁶⁶ In Chapter XVI of his *Address to the Greeks*, he would later identify the constitution of demons to be a species of *matter* to be distinguished from the ‘lower matter’ of humans. Thus, someone like Tertullian (circa 155 – 240 A.D.) is able to describe them as ‘invisible and intangible, [and so] we are not cognizant of their action save by its effects, as when some inexplicable, unseen poison in the breeze blights the apples and the grain while in the flower’.⁶⁷ According to Tertullian, they also have location in that they ‘[dwell] in the air [in]

⁶³ Athenagoras, *A Plea for the Christians* XXV and XXVI, translated from *Ante-Nicene Christian Library: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325*, II, trans. by Marcus Dodds, George Reith, B. P. Bratton in Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1879), pp. 407-408.

⁶⁴ *The First Apology* V, *ibid.*, p. 164.

⁶⁵ *The First Apology* XIV, *ibid.*, p. 167.

⁶⁶ Tatian, *Address of Tatian to the Greeks* XV, translated from *Ante-Nicene Christian Library: Tatian, Theophilus, and the Clementine Recognitions*, trans. by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1867), p. 21.

⁶⁷ Tertullian, *Apology* XXII, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. by Roberts, et al, p. 36.

nearness to the stars [and have] commerce with the clouds'.⁶⁸ Origen (184/185 – 253/254 A.D.) suggests additional geographical locations where the demons 'haunt the denser parts of bodies' as well as the 'unclean places upon earth' and yet all the while they are devoid of 'bodies of earthly material'.⁶⁹ In solidarity with his Christian contemporaries, Origen believed that demons possessed an incorporeal nature. But, also like his contemporaries, he thinks that such a nature is to be identified as something like air (a 'material spirit')⁷⁰ such that it exhibits certain physical properties like weight.⁷¹ Origen supposed that demons, which also reside in the air, could breathe in the vapours of earthly sacrifices and of blood from which they may acquire nourishment.⁷² This function implies that they would have olfactory senses and some kind of digestive system.

The Fathers also comment about what the demons can *do*. According to Tatian, demons 'are seen [...] by the men possessed of soul, when, as sometimes, they exhibit themselves to men' whether to deceive or to destroy.⁷³ Tertullian speaks of how dynamic and intimate their interaction with the world is in that '[demons] inflict, accordingly, upon our bodies diseases and other grievous calamities'.⁷⁴ He says 'by an influence equally obscure, demons and angels

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 37.

⁶⁹ Origen, *Against Celsus* IV. 92, translated from *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325, Volume IV – Fathers of the Third Century: Tertullian, Part 4; Minucius Felix; Commodian; Origen, Parts First and Second*, translated from Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and Arthur Cleveland Coxe (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1886), p. 538.

⁷⁰ Origen, *De Principiis* III. 4. 2.

⁷¹ Russell, *Satan: The Early Christian Tradition*, pp. 125ff. This view is also in agreement with the pre-Socratics and Plato. While being an incorporeal substance that is supernatural, one cannot help but imagine 'material spirit' to not be anything other than paradoxical and oxymoronic on its face.

⁷² Origen, *Against Celsus* VII. 5; VIII. 30-33, 60-61. According to VII. 5, the constitutional makeup of a created being can actually be altered on the basis of that being's moral behaviour.

⁷³ Tatian, *Address of Tatian* XVI, Roberts and Donaldson, *ibid*.

⁷⁴ Tertullian, *Apology* XXII, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. by Roberts, et al, p. 36.

breathe into the soul, and rouse up its corruptions with furious passions and vile excesses'.⁷⁵

They can even heal diseases they themselves create:

For, first of all, they make you ill; then, to get a miracle out of it, they command the application of remedies either altogether new, or contrary to those in use, and straightway withdrawing hurtful influence, they are supposed to have wrought a cure.⁷⁶

By the end of the third century, there was no clear and uncontroversial theory as to who the demons are or from what they are composed. They are described as intelligent, incorporeal spirits but are composed of a material, aerial substance. They are 'material spirits' that are otherworldly but this-worldly at the same time (i.e. in the air or underground). They are invisible but potentially visible. They lack a corporeal, animal nature but are sexually arousable and interactive with nature. A comfortable border between matter and spirit has not been satisfactorily delineated and this metaphysical problem is uncritically embraced and handed off to medieval philosophers, to whom we now turn.

2.6 Medieval Christian Views of Demonological Metaphysics

Since the Fathers had developed their philosophy and theology thanks in part to the detracting heretics of their time, the intellectuals who carefully sculpted the doctrinal and

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 37. Tertullian later says that demons inflict bodily ailments on people for the sole reason of validating themselves to others as bringers of miracles. See Tertullian, *Apology*, Chapter XXIII.

philosophical positions of Christianity during this time seemed obliged to the task of defending them. As a result of their rigorous defences, the various budding doctrines that seemed to challenge conventional thinking that were once merely taken on the testimony of the earlier witnesses were subsequently clarified for the very first time.⁷⁷ Demonology surely fits among those unclear doctrines but, unlike the Christological controversies, there was not enough interest to force it into any sort of standardisation.⁷⁸ The metaphysics of demons, as espoused by its professing realists, centres on the seemingly contradictory assertions that demons are incorporeal and spiritual (per scripture) and yet composed of a fine particulate matter simply inaccessible through ordinary sensory contact. As it turns out, the medieval portrait was starting to look a bit more diverse.

Long before the burgeoning of angelic and demonic metaphysics at the hands of the later Scholastics, Augustine of Hippo (354 – 430 A.D.) was one of the first of the medieval Christian philosophers to offer up a serious attempt at a philosophical framework for understanding intermediary beings of either kind. Augustine writes that angels are indeed spiritual beings. Though ‘angel’ itself denotes a functional role, regarding ‘the nature of such beings, you will find that they are spirits.’⁷⁹ He adds that such creatures possess an ‘ethereal body.’⁸⁰ Interestingly, such an ethereal body is then equated to the post-resurrection bodies of

⁷⁷ Particularly, the relationship between the Christological *logos* and God the Father (which was settled at Nicaea) and the nature of the incarnation of Jesus culminating at Chalcedon (although the warring theological factions represented by Monophysitism and Dyophysitism lingered on).

⁷⁸ ‘For what is the necessity for affirming, or denying, or defining with accuracy on these subjects, and others like them, when we may without blame be entirely ignorant of them?’. Augustine, *The Enchiridion* XVI. 59, translated from *The Enchiridion on Faith, Hope and Love*, trans. by Thomas Hibbs (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing Inc., 1996), p. 71.

⁷⁹ Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 103(l). 15, tr. by Boniface Ramsey, *Expositions of the Psalms, 99-120, V* (New York City, NY: New York City Press, 2003), p. 125.

⁸⁰ Augustine, *Epistula* IX. 3.

the future saints – something quite physical though supernatural.⁸¹ Regarding demons, Augustine does not sculpt a new view inasmuch as he seeks to systematise and apply the diverse theological (and pagan) perspectives that he finds grounded in some way in the Bible and sacred Patristic tradition. Since the angelic nature is the original nature of demons, they are spiritual, too.⁸² But when Augustine goes on to describe the demons, he is not thinking of them in terms of being pure spirit as God is; rather, he is aligning himself with (or at least ceding for the sake of argument) views that acknowledge that demons ‘possess one attribute peculiar to themselves, that is, an aerial body.’⁸³ This airy nature is heavier than and more inferior to the ethereal nature of the angelic ontology.⁸⁴ Elsewhere he adds that such creatures were fashioned from ‘spiritual matter’ (something akin to Origen’s ‘material spirit’) and, evidently, Augustine believed that they were anything but a purely spiritual being.⁸⁵ Once again, being a ‘spirit’ no longer appears to be clearly segregated from one’s being an utterly immaterial intelligence or entity. While Augustine attempts to offer up God’s necessary existence as an essential distinguishing characteristic of ‘spirit’ from the kind of ‘spiritual matter’ angels and demons are,⁸⁶ we lack any clear taxonomy of a spiritual ontology – particularly one that delineates between spirit and matter in a way that is analytically

⁸¹ Augustine, *De Diversis Quaestionibus* 47.

⁸² Augustine, *De Beata Vita*; III. 18; *Confessions* III. 3. 6.

⁸³ Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* IX. 13, translated from *The City of God against the Pagans*, trans. by R. W. Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 375. Also see his *De Ordine* II. 9. 27 and *De Genesi Ad Litteram* XIII. 17.; for some follow-up comments in the secondary literature, see Henry Ansgar Kelly, *Satan: A Biography* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 244; Inta Ivanovska, ‘The Demonology of Saint Augustine of Hippo’, (unpublished doctoral thesis, Saint Louis University, 2011), p. 51. According to Ivanovska, the ‘airy’ nature is an exclusive property of demonic bodies and not something the good angels are said to have for their constitution is distinctively ‘ethereal’ (p. 249). She speaks of Augustine’s ‘hesitation’ and ‘conjecture’ in cautiously using the terminology of ‘air’ to describe demonic bodies at all (Ibid., p. 248), something that cannot be said about Augustine’s predecessors.

⁸⁴ Augustine, *De Genesi ad Litteram* III. 10. 15.

⁸⁵ See Augustine, *Confessions* XII. 17. 25.

⁸⁶ *Confessions* XII.

satisfying.⁸⁷ According to an apt summary by Inta Ivanovska, Augustine makes '[t]he issue of the 'bodies of angels' [...] one of the most knotted challenges of [his own] angelology.'⁸⁸

Augustine's affirmation of demons being aerial creatures and interacting with (or *within*) the bodies of human beings would officially make quasi-materialism of his demonological metaphysics an almost creedal baseline for subsequent thinkers. But it is a permanent fortress built on unmitigated ambiguity. Yet Augustine and the earlier Fathers do not stand alone. Thanks to the influence of Aristotelian hylomorphism, quasi-materialism takes a somewhat different connotation in later medieval Scholasticism that ends up being no less obscure. Bonaventure (1221 – 1274 A.D.), a Franciscan and contemporary of Thomas Aquinas, adopted the view that intermediary beings exist as a requisite (*oportuit*) of a world divinely designed and created.⁸⁹ This is a return to the ancient Platonic and Aristotelian views of the Great Chain of Being. While human beings are composites of material and immaterial substances intrinsically united to each other, angels are ontologically closer in being to God and so do not have any intrinsic pairing with their material bodies.⁹⁰ As such, their constitution is closer to the spiritual (in the sense of not being composed of the stuff that rocks and animals and other concrete objects are made) though not purely immaterial. All created things that exist must themselves have a hylomorphic composition and so the angelic *compositum* can be immaterial and yet have material properties.⁹¹ Given the complexity of the incorporeal-yet-material status of

⁸⁷ I.e. how is the air of a demon's ontology any different than the air of our atmosphere?

⁸⁸ Ivanovska, *op. cit.*, p. 238. His metaphysics of angels in general and of demons in particular, says Ivanovska, is 'a daunting challenge' (p. 245), a product of 'random patchwork and loose stitching' (p. 251) leading to an overall 'systematically problematic' (p. 252) demonology.

⁸⁹ Bonaventure, *Commentaria in Quatuor Libros Sententiarum*, II. 1. 2. 1. 1.

⁹⁰ *Commentaria*, II. 1. 2. 3. 2 and 3. 1. 1. 1 ; Also see Étienne Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure*, translated by Dom Illtyd Trethowan and Frank J. Sheed (Paterson, NJ: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1965), pp. 215-216.

⁹¹ *Commentaria*, Book II, Dist. III, Part I, Art. I, Quest. 1; cf. Gilson, *Bonaventure*, p. 222.

angels,⁹² there is a fundamental agreement with the ethereal/aerial ontologies of the Fathers and Augustine. And what is true ontologically of the angels is true of the demons.⁹³

Contrary to the various species of quasi-materialism, Pseudo-Dionysius (circa sixth century) goes against the grain and supposes that since God is himself pure spirit, it must also be the case that those closest (ontologically) to him are also pure spirits. Angels, being closest to God, naturally share in that pure spirituality. This conclusion is what sets Pseudo-Dionysius apart from his quasi-materialist counterparts for, as David Keck notes, 'Pseudo-Dionysius seems to have been the first Christian to have argued for the pure spirituality of the angels'.⁹⁴ This view would go on to thrive in the Dominican wing of Scholasticism while the Franciscans, following Bonaventure, would opt for Aristotelian, universal hylomorphism for both angelic and demonic beings.

Concerning the demons specifically, in further contrast to Augustine and (the later) Bonaventure, Dionysius affirmed the incorporeality and pure immateriality of both angels and demons. He writes:

Through these all Spiritual Beings and faculties and activities
(whether perceived or percipient) began; through these they exist
and possess a life incapable of failure or diminution, and are
untainted by any corruption or death or materiality or birth, being
separate above all instability and flux and restlessness of change.

⁹² Gilson says that 'the angels [are] presented to us as spiritual substances, wholly independent of bodies, [and yet] composed of matter and form'. Gilson, *Bonaventure*, p. 226. Also see David Keck, *Angels and Angelology in the Middle Ages* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 31-32.

⁹³ *Commentaria*, Book II, Dist. IV, Art. I, Quest. 2.

⁹⁴ Keck, *Angels and Angelology*, p. 31.

And whereas they are bodiless and immaterial they are perceived by our minds, and whereas they are minds themselves, they possess a supernatural perception and receive an illumination (after their own manner) concerning the hidden nature of things, from whence they pass on their own knowledge to other kindred spirits.⁹⁵

He seems to have never compromised this understanding with muddled talk of ethereal or aerial bodies.⁹⁶ Unfortunately, he never works out any of the biblical scenarios from Genesis to Revelation that describe how demons and their chief are able to interact with this world.

As a contemporary of Bonaventure's, Thomas Aquinas (1225 – 1274 A.D.) parts ways with his fellow Scholastic in defending the Dionysian sentiment that both angels and demons are indeed purely immaterial creatures.⁹⁷ He writes that 'the higher substances, that is, the angels, are totally apart from bodies, subsisting immaterially and in intelligible existence'.⁹⁸ They are endowed with rational faculties that can subsist wholly apart from any kind of material bodies – including the *hyle* of hylomorphism. Regarding demons specifically, he also

⁹⁵ *On the Divine Names*, IV. 1, translated from *Dionysius the Areopagite on the Divine Names and the Mystical Theology*, trans. by Clarence E. Rolt (New York: Cosimo Books, 2007), p. 87.

⁹⁶ As evidence of the clarity and perpetuity of this pure immaterialism, Thomas Aquinas later assures us that 'angels and demons have not bodies naturally united to them, but are wholly incorporeal as Dionysius says' and that '[w]ithout doubt Dionysius maintained that angels and demons are incorporeal'. Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae De Potentia Dei*, VI. 6, translated from *On the Power of God: (Quaestiones Disputatae de Potentia Dei)*, trans. by Lawrence Shapcote (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1933), p. 198.

⁹⁷ Aquinas' development of the metaphysics of angels requires him to reckon how an Aristotelian can come to see how the soul might subsist in a way Christians typically understand it as a form free of the hylomorphic baggage which is notably defended by Bonaventure.

⁹⁸ Aquinas, 'On Angelic Knowledge', *Summa Theologiae*, I. 55. 2, translated from *Thomas Aquinas: Selected Writings*, trans. by Ralph McInerny (London: Penguin Books, 1998), p. 379. Also see Aquinas, *De Spiritualibus Creaturis* IX. 2.

agrees with Dionysius that ‘devils do not have bodies joined to them by nature.’⁹⁹ Aquinas, himself a Dominican, came to represent the prevailing viewpoint on angels and demons well into the contemporary period.

Regarding the powers of the demons, Augustine taught, along with the Fathers, that the demons have some kind of supernatural ability to manifest to and deceive percipients.¹⁰⁰ But this capability need not necessarily be understood as a power intrinsic to the demonic nature in the way that being visible is to opaque corporeal objects.¹⁰¹ Perhaps that power is extrinsic and one that is temporarily leased to them as the occasion demands. However, by means of ‘clarification’, Augustine seems to suggest that demons *do* have an intrinsic physical sense perception and transmission mechanism that can pick up and manipulate the bodily traces of human thoughts.¹⁰² It is through this medium that demons are able to stir the passions (even the subtle ones) within their victims. Thus, such internal agitations in human beings, being demonically induced, are physical movements of fluids inside the body (viz. ‘bile’) as they affect the mind. Aquinas agrees and points out that Satan ‘sensibly appears to human beings in some form and sensibly speaks with them and persuades them to sin’ as exemplified by the biblical accounts where Satan ‘tempted the first human being in the garden of paradise in the form of a serpent, and he tempted Christ in the desert in some visible form.’¹⁰³ Elsewhere Aquinas insists that not only can demons interact with physical bodies, they can act as craftsmen and, so, can

⁹⁹ *De Malo*, III. 4, translated from *On Evil*, trans. by Richard Regan and ed. by Brian Davies (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 438.

¹⁰⁰ See Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* VII. 35; also see G. R. Evans, *Augustine on Evil* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 105.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Augustine, *Adnotationes in Iob* I. 1 and *De Civitate Dei* X. 21.

¹⁰² See Augustine, *De Divinatione Daemonum* IX; Also see Gerard O’Daly’s discussion in his *Augustine’s Philosophy of Mind* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1987), pp. 122-124.

¹⁰³ Aquinas, *De Malo*, III. 4, tr. and ed. by Richard Regan in Brian Davies, *On Evil* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 155-156.

cause bodily transformations.¹⁰⁴ But this talk of extraordinary power looks like a salvage operation invoked to explain how immaterial demons can interact with the world. The quandary thus passes on to the modern era, the subject of our next section.

2.7 Modern Christian Views of Demonological Metaphysics

After the waning of Scholasticism in the Christian church, any discussions about the reality of angels and demons that ensued became the sole province of theology (or were merely mentioned in passing by Christian philosophers). This was further solidified during the Protestant Reformation's impeachment of philosophy as a reliable vehicle to understanding all matters theological. As such, the sixteenth century saw no significant divergence from the antecedent views of the medieval thinkers.¹⁰⁵ Perhaps the most salient contributions come from significant non-philosophers like Martin Luther and Ignatius of Loyola who both perpetuated the idea that the Devil was far more active in human affairs than originally thought.¹⁰⁶ The Devil's actions ranged from individual affliction to institutionalised leadership. Demons would harass people through apparitions and possessions, enact sorcery and witchcraft in beguiling and enchanting the susceptible cultures, and even empower and control the very Pope of Rome who was declared by Reformers to be the apocalyptic Antichrist.

It was not until the eighteenth century, and on the cusp of the Age of Enlightenment, when philosophy began to challenge the canonical declarations of faith and tradition in its emphasising and championing reason as the supreme indicator of truth and the disavowing of

¹⁰⁴ Aquinas, *De Potentia Dei* VI. 5.

¹⁰⁵ See Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Mephistopheles: The Devil in the Modern World* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), pp. 26ff.

¹⁰⁶ Jeffrey Burton Russell, *The Prince of Darkness: Radical Evil and the Power of Good in History* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), pp. 168-173.

miracles as a real property of biblical events.¹⁰⁷ The emphasis changed from a focus on the otherworldly realm to the physical, present world. And when the fascination with witchcraft and magic had reached its zenith, having been rooted in medieval demonology and fed by Lutheran Protestantism, '[n]either the scientific nor the hermetic view of the world had much room for the Devil.'¹⁰⁸ It is not surprising then that not much serious thought went into defining (much less defending) an ontologically realist view of demons, though many Christian apologists at the time certainly counter-argued in defence of the core miracle stories surrounding the person of Jesus. Those philosophers and thinkers that did tend to specifically address belief in demons during the time entertained conclusions that deviated not only from their Christian predecessors but also the scriptures themselves – often citing legendary overlay or the linguistic devices of allegory and metaphor as enlightened explanations for the scriptural presence of demons.¹⁰⁹ Once Satan became demythologised as a mere symbol for radical evil, any talk of demonological metaphysics would be relegated to extraneous myth and superstition, though not a subject off limits to ongoing speculation.¹¹⁰ Since my interest rests

¹⁰⁷ H. C. Erik Midelfort observes: 'The 1720s and 1730s were also the decades of high dispute over the nature of miracles, and several of the demonologists took part in that debate as well, criticizing either the evidence for or the very possibility of New Testament miracles'. *Exorcism and Enlightenment: Johann Joseph Gassner and the Demons of Eighteenth-Century Germany* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), p 92.

¹⁰⁸ Russell, *Mephistopheles*, p. 28.

¹⁰⁹ Under the influence of Hermann Reimarus (1694 – 1768) and the rise of German Rationalism, David Friedrich Strauss (1808 – 1874) significantly influenced a notable stream of Christian scholarship in his demythologizing of the Christian faith in general and the Gospel portraits of Jesus in particular. Merrill Unger mentions Strauss's interpretation of the Gospel portrayals of Jesus as an exorcist when he succinctly notes that, according to Strauss, 'the whole narrative of Jesus's demon expulsions is merely symbolic, without actual foundation of fact' and that '[d]emon possession, so-called, is but a vivid symbol of the prevalence of evil in the world'. Unger, *Biblical Demonology*, p. 90. Strauss uses the demonic possession stories of the Gospels as evidence of legendary development in the Gospels. See David Strauss, *The Life of Jesus: Critically Examined*, tr. by Marian Evans (New York City, NY: Blanchard, 1860), pp. 426ff; Russell, *Mephistopheles*, p. 80.

¹¹⁰ Francis Bacon (1561-1626), contrary to those of the Reformation, was not opposed to one speculating about the nature of angelic creatures, emphasising that such investigations are 'neither inscrutable nor interdicted' and so 'the sober and grounded inquiry, which may arise out of the passages of Holy Scriptures, or out of the gradations of nature, is not restrained. So of degenerate and revolted spirits. [... T]he contemplation or science of

on the assumption that such beings *do* exist as described in the canons of Christianity, I shall whittle down my focus during this time to the handful of philosophers who made some sort of metaphysical contribution to a realist demonology.

The English philosopher and social contractarian Thomas Hobbes (1588 – 1679 A.D.) endorsed a full-blown materialism in his identification of the ontologies of angels and demons. This is in deep contrast to both the Patristic and medieval philosophers who either affirmed a sort of quasi-materialism or outright pure immaterialism. The reason for Hobbes' overt materialism is because he finds the notion of an incorporeal and immaterial being to be incoherent.¹¹¹ Hobbes describes angels and demons thusly:

I find in Scripture that there be Angels, and Spirits, good and evill;
but not that they are Incorporeall, as are the Apparitions men see
in the Dark, or in a Dream, or Vision.¹¹²

While Hobbes may have easily solved the problem of how angels and demons can interact with the world, he has done so at the expense of the credal affirmations that demons (and angels) are incorporeal, immaterial spirits.

their nature, their power, their illusions, either by Scripture or reason, is a part of spiritual wisdom'. *The Advancement of Learning* II. 6. 2, ed. by Basil Montagu, *The Works of Francis Bacon, Lord Chancellor of England* (Parry & McMillan, 1859), p. 195. But Bacon seems quite sceptical of their existence when he cryptically suggests that they are 'fabulous and fantastical' (ibid.).

¹¹¹ See Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* III. 34. 207-208, 211, 213-214.

¹¹² Hobbes, *Leviathan* IV. 45. 355, ed. by C. B. MacPherson, *Thomas Hobbes: Leviathan* (London: Penguin Books, 1985), p. 664. Hobbes does spend some time discussing demons, but not their metaphysics. His focus is on arguing against the ancient Greek misunderstandings of demons being segregated into good and evil beings; and he offers up some reasons for thinking that 'demonic possession' is nothing but a metaphorical appellation. See Hobbes, *Leviathan* IV.45.352-356.

This firm commitment would not be the conclusion of Hobbes' contemporary, John Locke (1632 – 1704 A.D.). Locke believed that 'though we are told that there are different species of angels; [...] we know not how to frame distinct specific ideas of them'¹¹³ except roughly through the analogy of the human mind. Locke did seem to think that angels, as well as demons, are in fact immaterial creatures and conceivably exist as such. He makes mention of the 'nature and operations of finite immaterial beings [such as] spirits, angels, devils.'¹¹⁴ On the other hand, Locke seems content to affirm another possibility posed by the faith tradition of the Christian church, one that subtly evinces the church's inconsistency on this subject:

The supposition, at least, that angels do sometimes assume bodies, needs not startle us; since some of the most ancient and most learned Fathers of the church seemed to believe that they had bodies: and this is certain, that their state and way of existence is unknown to us.¹¹⁵

Consequently, he is hesitant to speak of '[w]hether angels and spirits have any analogy to [figure, breadth, and thickness], in respect to expansion, [which] is beyond my comprehension.'¹¹⁶ In short, there is a problem but no solution is forthcoming.

It was very apparent that, given the absence of any coherent creed or a singular metaphysical theory of demonology, a univocal understanding of the demons' ontology was

¹¹³ Locke, *Essay* III. 6. 11, James Augustus St. John, ed. by James Augustus St. John, *Philosophical Works: An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, II (London: Bell & Daldy, 1894), p. 48.

¹¹⁴ Locke, *Essay* IV. 16. 12, James Augustus St. John, *Philosophical Works*, p. 279.

¹¹⁵ Locke, *Essay* II. 23. 13, James Augustus St. John, *Philosophical Works*, p. 250.

¹¹⁶ Locke, *Essay* II. 15. 11, James Augustus St. John, *Philosophical Works*, p. 324.

still far from codification. Following Locke, the next step of the metaphysics of demonology was, essentially, to dismiss any further notions of realism. Once theology became increasingly influenced by deistic philosophers and progressive theologians, any realism pertaining to the intervention of supernatural beings (including the demons) was rejected.¹¹⁷ The more conservative, realist theologians (like the mystics and the Reformers) did not dare to speculate about the metaphysics of demons other than to suggest that their presence was felt in the current harassment of Christians. Belief in demons had, once again, fallen into a period of developmental, philosophical stagnation. It remained behind the scenes and devoid of philosophical focus until the contemporary period – a period which we shall now explore.

2.8 Contemporary Christian Views of Demonological Metaphysics

As with the previous four hundred years (with the exception of those like Hobbes), Christian philosophers of the contemporary period did not add anything to demonology. This period of time marked a substantial diminution of speculations about the metaphysics of demons.¹¹⁸ As a matter of historical fact, the prospect of belief in demons seemed to be kept alive, not so much at the hands of the philosopher's pen (for the rationalists had successfully relegated angelology and demonology to the world of mere faith) but by the artist's paintbrush in that it has moved from the world of fact to the world of fiction. Due to 'Johann Faustus', European theatre, John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and a host

¹¹⁷ Voltaire is rumoured to have described belief in the Devil as a 'disgusting fantasy' (i.e. Russell, *Mephistopheles*, p. 136).

¹¹⁸ 'Daimonology died out, at least in the sense that later canonical Western thinkers did not occupy themselves with daimons or daimonology as such but addressed the order of spiritual life in different conceptual framings'. Steven G. Smith, 'Daimon Thinking and the Question of Spiritual Power', *The Heythrop Journal*, 55 (2014), 173-187 (p. 183).

of other Romanticist literature and art, such sources reversed the trend of wanting to mythologise demons.¹¹⁹ Having been disenchanted with magic and the witch hunt craze fostered by such vivid storytelling (particularly once the targets of the famous witch hunts turned on some of society's elite!), eventually a purely secular worldview began to dominate philosophical thinking commencing with the notable, sceptical influence of David Hume.¹²⁰ The rise of deterministic science (such as that espoused in Newton's *Principia*) essentially made demons irrelevant as explanatory causes. But it seems clear that those philosophers who persisted in the realist tradition and had bothered to write on the subject tended toward some form of what I shall call the 'Dominican view' as exemplified by Thomas Aquinas (that demons are real, post-angelic immaterial creatures being endowed with supernatural powers to materialise and/or manipulate physical objects).¹²¹ While it is a reasonable view – one that is at least self-consistent – it requires that demons have (as a mere assumption) certain creative magical powers. This perception seems to be the prevailing interpretation for contemporary Christian philosophers and theologians who have flouted the trend toward demonic anti-realism. Accordingly, the Dominican view continues to be the prevailing theory.

Following a conservative theology influenced by (at least) Aquinas, Mortimer J. Adler appears to toe the Dominican line of reasoning when it comes to demonological (and angelological) metaphysics. Concerning the ontology of angels, he consistently and adamantly

¹¹⁹ See Russell, *Mephistopheles*, pp. 58-76, 91-127; id., *The Prince of Darkness*, Chapter 14.

¹²⁰ See Russell, *The Prince of Darkness*, pp. 208-211.

¹²¹ Examples of such demonological realists spanning the seventeenth century through the twentieth century include Nicolas Malebranche (*De la Recherche de la Vérité* II. 3. 6), Blaise Pascal (see his *Lettres Provinciales* XIV (October 23, 1656)), Samuel Clarke (see his *A Discourse Concerning the Unchangeable Obligations of Natural Religion and the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Revelation*, 'The Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion', Prop. XIV), William Paley (see his *The Clergyman's Companion in Visiting the Sick* IV-V), John Henry Newman (see his Easter sermon entitled 'Victory of Good over Evil' (March 31, 1872)), and C. S. Lewis (see his preface to the revised edition of *The Screwtape Letters* (London: Macmillan, 1961)).

affirms that they are purely immaterial. Adler claims this mostly for scriptural reasons but also due to important sources of tradition like the Nicene Creed.¹²² They are, he writes, ‘immaterial and incomposite’ and, as a result, ‘angels are immortal.’¹²³ It is uncontroversial for him, then, that demons would subsequently be described in a similar fashion when he writes that ‘the devils [are] fallen angels and so purely spiritual creatures.’¹²⁴ Given the contributions of the rationalists of previous centuries, Adler thinks that philosophy cannot get us to a demonstration of the existence of angels and demons.¹²⁵ Similarly, Peter Kreeft is also quite clear about the immateriality of angels. When equating human souls with angels, he stresses that both are ‘pure spirits’ and so ‘[n]either one has size or color. Neither one has parts. [...] And neither one has weight.’¹²⁶ Additionally, he continues, to be a spirit means to engender the ‘power of thinking – conscious, deliberate, rational understanding’ along with the ‘power of willing and choosing and deliberately loving.’¹²⁷ Moreover, angels are also ‘[n]ot in space. Space contains bodies, not spirits.’¹²⁸ Not surprisingly, the Devil also ‘is a pure spirit’¹²⁹ as are the demons, and they ‘do not have bodies’.¹³⁰ As with Adler and Kreeft, Peter S. Williams strenuously affirms

¹²² See Mortimer J. Adler, *The Angels and Us* (New York: MacMillan, 1982), pp. 37-38, 79, 108, 122. On page 141 Adler does make a passing reference to heaven being ‘not a physical place’ and so any spatial attributes, such as location, would be inappropriately applied to angels.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 159. Elsewhere he specifically says that angels are ‘incorporeal and, therefore, [have] the simplicity that belongs to anything indivisible [...]’ (p. 57).

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

¹²⁵ See his four conclusions on *ibid.*, p. 55.

¹²⁶ Peter Kreeft, *Angels and Demons: What Do We Really Know About Them?* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1995), p. 51. There are other places he makes explicit reference to angels as ‘pure spirits’ (see pp. 50, 85, and 133).

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

that angels are immaterial spirits and that ‘they have no bodies, and so no physically perceived sense data.’¹³¹ Also, since

angels are bodiless spirits they have no appearance in themselves;
they are invisible. It’s not that angels have bodies that can’t be
seen [...] but that *they have no body to be seen*.¹³²

When it comes to the kind of power demons have, Adler, like Pseudo-Dionysius, does not discuss *how* Satan (and the demons) interact with this world, though he acknowledges *that* they do: ‘[The Devil] is a mighty person with intelligence and will whose energies are bent on the destruction of the cosmos and on the misery of the creatures.’¹³³ Adler just does not give us the specifics. Similarly, Kreeft says that demons have certain innate powers, including the ‘ability to move matter supernaturally’¹³⁴ which enables them to ‘manipulate any material vehicles on occasion, including animals.’¹³⁵ Williams affirms that ‘they can apparently cause themselves to look like anything they want, either by manipulating our imaginations or [...] by “assuming a body.”’¹³⁶ Moreover, he asks:

¹³¹ Peter S. Williams, *The Case for Angels* (London: Paternoster Press, 2002), p. 80; He also affirms this in his unpublished article, ‘In Defence of Angelology.’

¹³² Williams, *The Case for Angels*, p. 90; emphasis his. In a note of clarification, Williams’ use of ‘spirit’ in application to angels (and disembodied humans for that matter) is not merely one to be described negatively (as, say, a mere synonym for ‘immaterial’), but as a positively embracing term that includes ‘capacities for thought, feeling, consciousness and active volitional power’ (p. 78) making them ‘persons’ that are ‘self-aware’ (p. 80). Therefore, ‘it is perfectly possible for angels to exist in the absence of any space-time continuum (just as it is possible for God so to do)’ (p. 87).

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 301.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

¹³⁶ Williams, *The Case for Angels*, p. 90.

Can angels act to produce effects in the natural world? It is strongly conceivable that if angels existed, they could interact with matter. Besides [...] spirit-matter interaction is perfectly intelligible in that it obviously takes place every day in humans.¹³⁷

What is said to be true of angels is also said to be true of demons (right in line with Williams' contemporaries): 'Demons are both *like* Angels in being naturally un-embodied spirits.'¹³⁸ In terms of sparsely documented cases of demonic interaction, Williams makes a passing mention of 'reports of demonic levitation',¹³⁹ which would presumably be a case of a spirit interacting with matter. But, concerning the ability of demons to manifest themselves, it is worth noting that Williams seems to break from tradition when he declares the following:

It would seem to be the case that demons cannot assume bodies. [...] God refuses to manufacture bodies for demons to assume. On this explanation the idioplastic difference between Angels and demons is extrinsic [...] [and] Occam's Razor enjoins us to accept [this view] because it is simpler to assign the power of creating bodies to God alone than it is to attribute it to angels as well.¹⁴⁰

2.9 Conclusion

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 140, n. 87.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

I have surveyed a notable selection of influential pre-Christian and Christian sources who have shaped and contributed to the philosophical narrative surrounding the ontology of demons; understanding that much that arises in such discussions is the focus on the primal angelic nature first and the demon second. It is apparent that the thought and speculation concerning such beings has either been *prima facie* self-contradictory (i.e. advancing and defending the spiritual nature of such creatures while simultaneously affirming their (quasi-) material status) or inconsistent with other authoritative voices. This is to say that various representative metaphysical views are sometimes at odds with what other fellow philosophers have developed (i.e. consider how Pseudo-Dionysius' pure immaterialism sits in tension with Bonaventure's and Hobbes' (quasi-) materialism). Here is a summarisation of each thinker's perspective on the demonic vis-à-vis their metaphysical status as 'spirit':

	Demons are 'spirit'	Demons are material	Demons are immaterial
Justin Martyr	X	X	
Tatian the Assyrian	X	X	
Tertullian	X	?	
Origen	X	X	
Lactantius	X	I	
Augustine	X	X	
Pseudo-Dionysius	X		X
Bonaventure	X	X	
Thomas Aquinas	X		X
Thomas Hobbes	X	X	
John Locke	X	?	?
Mortimer J. Adler	X		X
Peter Kreeft	X		X
Peter S. Williams	X		X

?=Unknown; I=Implied; The empty cells represent 'at least not likely.'

For all of these philosophers, demons are indeed spirit as the Bible and tradition say. Most take the term to be a line of demarcation separating beings that are incorporeal (or 'finely material')

from beings that are corporeal (or 'grossly material'). This intimates the antecedent Greek view that regarded the *daimon* as an ontologically intermediate subject composed of an aerial substance. Perhaps this theory was absorbed into Christianity to explain how demons could be called spirits and yet interact with the physical world and facilitate an episode of human procreation. But this leaves the impression that one is attempting to have it both ways, viz. that something can be spirit and material at the same time – something that appears to betray what it means for God himself to be a spirit (cf. John 4.24). To salvage this disparate use, consequentially, one must consider 'spirit' to be an ambiguous term in that it would equally apply to at least one *purely* immaterial being (God) as well as to any quasi-material being.

For Hobbes this is not a problem at all, since in his opinion the Bible's use of 'spirit' does *not* designate or describe incorporeality; rather, it is something of a linguistic device – a metaphor. Hobbes' view is much more elegant in its consistency and univocal terminology, but it achieves this at the cost of making 'spirit' *always* a metaphorical, non-ontological description (something that defies at least *some* of the biblical uses as seen in Luke 24.39, 'a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have'). However, since the medieval period, some have sought to clarify the notion of spirit by insisting that it refers exclusively to *purely* immaterial creatures with no kind of material composition whatsoever. Only when we come to the contemporary era, perhaps motivated by Aquinas' influential abandonment of universal hylomorphism, do we see more of a consistent affirmation that demons are purely immaterial creatures. This fidelity to the immateriality of demons leads those partisan thinkers to a position even more elegant than that championed by Hobbes, that is, a position that not only endorses a univocal use of 'spirit' when applied to God, angel, and demon alike, but also a non-

metaphorical use of the term. But such a resolution also comes at a cost: it must now accommodate the biblical testimony of demons interacting with the physical world. Their resolution is just to ascribe to the demons a supernatural/mysterious power to manipulate and interact with nature. Still others, like Tatian and John Locke, withhold any definitive opinion on the matter.

As our survey of the diversity and inconsistency of Christian philosophers across the board indicates, there is a real need for a theory that harmonises the fact that the Bible speaks of the 'spiritual' nature of demons (and God alike) as well as their ability to somehow interact with this physical world. The scriptural data on their alleged physical interactions with the world are taken as undisputed. The pure immaterialists endorse a vague and ad hoc 'magical powers' hypothesis in order to account for how immaterial spirits intercourse with the world. The (quasi-) materialists do not need to flounder in accounting for their physical interactions except that they do compromise what it means to be an incorporeal spirit – no lighter a problem. It seems to me that if one were to undertake to form a careful creedal statement of demons, equipped with the hindsight of the corpus of Christianity's philosophical history, no coherent answer would be forthcoming. As such, I shall propose a theory that is both coherent with what we know about the demons and incorporates *all* of the relevant data pertaining to their ontology and activity. In the upcoming chapters, I shall explicate and defend what I find to be an appropriate solution to the metaphysics and activities of demons. In the next chapter, I shall begin by offering up my theory of *psychodynamic immaterialism*.

CHAPTER 3

PSYCHODYNAMIC IMMATERIALISM: PURE IMMATERIALISM AND COGNITIVE INTERACTION

3.1 Introduction

We have, thus far, looked at how philosophers of antiquity have contributed to the development of the metaphysics of belief in demons. That no singular coherent interpretive system has emerged from the disparate views offered by various partisan – viz. conservatively Christian – philosophers prior to the contemporary era is quite evident. It seemed natural and in accord with the antecedent Grecian world that the demon should be as the *daimon*, namely incorporeal (and so insensible) but quasi-material (and so spatial and physically interactive). This view can appear attractive in addressing how such creatures might interact within the physical universe (indeed, even within an individual human being) while remaining intangible and insensible. Unfortunately, this view compromises the biblical description of the demons' ontology as *pneuma* ('spirit') – the same designation that is used for describing God's purely immaterial ontology. That a number of contemporaries should find themselves approving and defending a Dominican view (viz. that demons are purely immaterial spirits endowed with a special ability to interact with the physical universe) is perhaps a testament to the failure of quasi-material theories to take seriously the pneumatic status of the demons.

The Dominican view (shaped primarily by the most influential Dominican, Thomas Aquinas) is not itself free from potential problems. While it happily preserves a univocal understanding of 'spirit', adherents are left to explain how an immaterial spirit can interact with a material universe. Consequently, they suppose that demons have creative or manipulative

power over nature and bodies. But what if the good angels (from which the demons are said to derive) seem to require God's creative intervention for such feats? There are some hints in the Bible that angels require God's intervention in order to interact with nature and bodies.¹ Moreover, provided that we also accept such a power for the demons, why do we lack any manifestation accounts in the Bible for demons while angelic manifestations are numerous and prevalent throughout both the Old and New Testaments?² I doubt these are somehow insurmountable challenges. But if a simpler and more consistent understanding of the demons' ontology can be envisaged – one that preserves the virtues of disambiguating 'spirit', accords well with the principles of parsimony (or simplicity), and accommodates best the full scope of the canonical data regarding the demons' behaviour – then we surely should entertain that view as a probable option for which metaphysical theory of belief in demons to embrace. It is my intent in this chapter to present and elucidate a theory of my own devising: psychodynamic immaterialism. I shall begin by addressing some virtues that a robust demonological theory ought to possess – virtues that lead us toward finding an elegant interpretive explanation and do not come off as inelegant salvage operations.

3.2 Some Virtues of an Elegant Model

The concept of the supernatural, as a broad referent, has been made nebulous at the hands of many people throughout modern and contemporary history. No longer is it

¹ Cf. Numbers 22.31, Revelation 7.2-3, and perhaps II Kings 6.15-17.

² I am aware that there are suggested manifestation accounts (such as Satan's alleged manifestation in the Garden of Eden and his alleged manifestation before Jesus in his wilderness temptation). I shall argue that these are not manifestation accounts at all and that one need not abandon a conservative reading of scripture (see Chapter 6, Section 6.3). But, even if they were, these are disproportionately smaller in number – significantly so! – when contrasted with the number of overt manifestation accounts of angels. I find this difficult to explain on the Dominican view.

considered just a metaphysical reality that transcends the physical space-time universe. Though usually tied to the concepts of 'ethereal', 'magical', or even 'fantastical', one may feel a certain amount of unfettered liberty in using 'supernatural' in describing certain nonphysical beings. Thus, one might easily use 'supernatural' as a virtual synonym for 'supra-logical' or 'trans-rational' such that any posed logical criticism would immediately be neutralised.³ In today's cultural climate, 'supernatural' seems to be closely associated with cinematic thrillers in which their menacing villain is always an otherworldly entity with the most visibly grandiose powers over others. This openness to such terminology has given rise to *superstition* which suggests a sort of fear of such magical extravagance because that extravagance is thought to evade even the protection of God. Plutarch once defined *superstition* as a 'disorder of the mind' whereby a theist will be so arrested by her fear of 'sour and vindictive' divine spirits (viz. demons) that that fear will override her sense of reason to the contrary.⁴ Thus, it makes appeals to the supernatural as justification for one's superstition neutralising of any putative objections. It seems that any proposed otherworldly figure can be ascribed any number of seemingly unverifiable attributes for the purpose of avoiding any crushing criticism. This, I think, is the problem of the supernatural so conceived and it surely looms over this present study in taking the justification process seriously in evaluating demonological metaphysics.

³ The universal possibilism of Descartes (cf. his first meditation in *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641)) illustrates how something seemingly impossible can somehow be made possible (e.g. that 2+3 may not equal 5) at the hands of a powerful 'demon' (*genium aliquem malignum*). The Cartesian 'demon,' thus, can conceivably do even the logically impossible. I am concerned that the unrestrained use of 'supernatural' would serve a similar end.

⁴ Plutarch, 'Of Superstition', in *Plutarch's Morals*, ed. by William W. Goodwin, I (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, and Company, 1874), p. 169.

Antony Flew once insisted on an epistemic *caveat emptor* in determining the conditions under which we may be justified in believing something supernatural.⁵ Flew's concern was that those who describe supernatural beings – and he is thinking specifically of God – might be given *carte blanche* when it comes to determining what sorts of attributes they might possess. Since supernatural beings are *unfamiliar* things beyond empirical verification, there is a concern that there may be no set of criteria or boundaries that forbid just any ontological attribution whatsoever. This would make such beings epistemically *unfalsifiable*. If one were to propose in a theological vacuum that a supernatural being has a magical power (that is, there is no special revelation or sacred writings that give a pre-philosophical basis for believing in that magical power) in order to avoid criticism, then, as Flew complains, we are merely *eluding* the criticism.⁶

Let us now turn to the project of codifying a theory of the metaphysics of angels and demons. Even if tenuous, the positing of a mechanism that explains how immaterial spirits interact with matter for such semi-divine creatures remains a *possibility* even if it should lack inductive or probabilistic confirmation. So this raises the following question: At what point, then, does describing a demon's ability to seemingly defy its nature not look like a merely contrived mechanism in order to avoid falsification? If something like the Dionysian-Dominican view is correct (viz. that demons are purely immaterial spirits), we should not expect an immaterial entity, *ceteris paribus*, to be intrinsically capable of interacting with matter. Thus,

⁵ Antony Flew, Basil Mitchell, and R. M. Hare, 'Theology and Falsification: the University Discussion', in *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*, ed. by Antony Flew and Alasdair MacIntyre (New York: Macmillan, 1955).

⁶ Flew thought that there is no epistemic distinction between a God bearing elusive attributes (like being invisible and intangible) and there being no God at all. It is not my goal to support all of the conclusions set forth by Flew, I am merely highlighting the specific concern that conjuring elusive attributes for no other reason other than to evade criticism is explanatorily problematic.

we should expect any canonical evidence to show either that immaterial spirits could not interact in such a way or that they do not. But a number of those in the Christian tradition acknowledge that they do, and so the Dionysian-Dominican must accommodate this anomaly by adding to her demonological metaphysics a magical powers hypothesis. This invokes a sort of Kuhnian concern about defending hypotheses from adverse criticism:⁷ To what extent does the emergence of some seemingly inexplicable anomaly that ‘has somehow violated the paradigm-induced expectations’⁸ merely get (uncritically) assimilated into the existing paradigm (or worldview) as opposed to imposing a real crisis that would require a wholesale change of that paradigm?⁹ A speculative medium for the transmission of light, such as the luminiferous aether, was posited in order to accommodate certain optical phenomena given the putative interpretation of Newtonian physics. Eventually, the scientific community succumbed to the problems beset by the anomalies that were discovered later which gave rise to and prompted a revolutionary change in favour of a different interpretation: Einsteinian relativity. At some point, the ongoing discovery of certain problems becomes intractable and, so, becomes a crisis. With a certain interpretation of reality becoming increasingly problematic under the weight of anomalies, when there are enough able protesters, they will revolt in opting for a new theory. At what point is the Dominican (demonological) metaphysician just protecting her theory

⁷ I acknowledge that Thomas Kuhn’s discussion is aimed specifically at *scientific* paradigms, but I find that much of what he says is equally applicable to non-scientific paradigms within philosophy and theology. For example, the challenges to Plato’s original Doctrine of the Forms have led to somewhat of a revolt against it. Others have modified Plato’s Doctrine in order to save it from wholesale abandonment.

⁸ Thomas Kuhn, *The Structures of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1970), pp. 52-53.

⁹ Kuhn’s book proceeds to discuss such a quandary (not to mention the addition of his scientific non-realism) and suggests that switching (scientific) paradigms might be a matter akin to a *political* revolution. See Kuhn, *ibid.*, pp. 66-173.

against anomalies versus legitimately learning something new about the demons within that model?

Positing an alternative metaphysical paradigm of demonology might enlighten us to theological and philosophical problems that are otherwise perceived as intractable. It may even accommodate new problems not previously anticipated. In addition to such a model's immediate explanatory significance for the biblical data (if correct), the fruits of this hypothesis would, as suggested above, offer explanatory insight into matters that have not been anticipated. Though it is not necessary for the correct theory to do this, it is certainly better if the justified theory can explain new data beyond the *explananda*. Therefore, justifiable supernatural explanations will not simply *accommodate* its criticism, and so be potentially unfalsifiable, but they will imply certain expectations that can be observed (such as what we might observe recorded in the Bible). Moreover, the supernatural explanation should sensibly explain the broadest range of *explananda*. It may even offer unanticipated insights into other related areas of research. And, so, the more an explanation exhibits these kinds of virtues, the more elegant the explanation.

I now want to offer up what I consider to be an elegant explanation of demonological metaphysics. Assuming that supernatural creatures like demons exist, I have a plausible, interpretive theory of what intermediary beings of the immaterial sort would do without appealing to an extraneous magical power given by God to explain how they might interact with this world.¹⁰ I shall thus provide and define here my own proposed interpretive theory of belief in demons that will be defended in the unfolding chapters ahead. In so doing, I will

¹⁰ I remind the reader that I take demons to be paradigm candidates for our understanding of this and not angels.

expand on the key concepts of the model's crucial components along with some contrasting terminology so as to emphasise the points of contention between competing theories.

3.3 Pure Immaterialism

According to the theory I am proposing, demons just are incorporeal, immaterial, spiritual realities, and I acknowledge that these terms have been used ambiguously.¹¹ But it seems to me that if we are to consider what *immaterialism* should mean specifically, especially since it is also used to describe the nature of God, it seems simpler to define it up front as a maximum state of affairs. Consider how an electronics engineer may use a multimeter to measure the amperes (the unit of measurement used to quantify the amount of current that is cycling) in a circuit. If the meter, despite its limitations in sensitivity, should read '0.000 amps', it is simpler to say that *there is no current in the circuit* than to say *there are 0.0001745 amps*. Similarly, if there is no qualification of what immateriality is supposed to be (viz. that it is either a quasi-material constitution or a purely immaterial constitution), then it is simpler to imagine that *immaterial* is a maximal state of affairs.¹² And by this I mean that *immaterial* just is a *maximal or pure* immaterialism – that there are no physical properties whatsoever. Rather than supposing in advance that 'immaterial' has a multiplicity of meanings depending on who is being described (which is to say that its meaning or application is equivocal), in the absence of

¹¹ Since 'incorporeal' and 'immaterial' have been broadly understood to include quasi-material views, such appellations describe the majority of views of demonological metaphysics throughout history. It seems to me that the materialism of someone like Thomas Hobbes is a marginal view and the Dionysian-Dominican view (of incorporeality and pure immateriality), though dominant today, is a relatively recent formulation. Refer to Chapter 2.

¹² Richard Swinburne makes a similar argument for explaining God's being maximally powerful, eternal, and all-knowing. For Swinburne, these properties are intrinsically more probable than finite degrees of power, longevity, and knowledge due to the simplicity of the formulation. See his *The Existence of God*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 96ff.

any contrary reason it is simpler to think that it has a singular connotation. In returning to my example, we would not arbitrarily presume that '0.000' on the multimeter means '0.0001745' simply because it is being applied to the amount of amps in a copper-based circuit and yet means '0.0000000' when applied to the amount of current in a zinc-based one. As such, we seem to have some univocal understanding about the ontological description of God's 'spirit'. Simplicity here might incline us, barring any reason to think otherwise, that we should apply the same understanding to the ontological descriptions of the angels' and demons' 'spirit.' Thus, if demons, angels, and God are consistently understood as being immaterial then we should think that all of these beings are utterly devoid of any physical properties whatsoever (apart from any countervailing evidence). This includes our divesting of any and all the *aerial* properties in describing demons for these would be quasi-material attributes.¹³ Only if we uncover evidence advancing something like quasi-materialism should we begin to add to the notion of immaterialism anything beyond its simplest formulation.

At this point I should say that my intention here is not to proffer a full-blown doctrine of demonology.¹⁴ Rather, I am supplementing and refining a traditional conservative approach

¹³ It remains debatable as to whether hylomorphism should be included in a pure immaterialism or not given philosophers' ambivalence over what *hyle* entails. Minimalist views of hylomorphism are satisfied with the designation of 'spirit matter,' or some such epithet, to account for the substratum of an unembodied mind without permitting an aerial constitution.

¹⁴ I am particularly impressed by the thoroughness of the four volumes by Jeffrey Burton Russell and published by Cornell University Press: *The Devil: Perceptions of Evil from Antiquity to Primitive Christianity* (1977); *Satan: The Early Christian Tradition* (1981); *Lucifer, the Devil in the Middle Ages* (1984); and *Mephistopheles: The Devil in the Modern World* (1986); Other important works include Merrill F. Unger's *Biblical Demonology: A Study of Spiritual Forces at Work Today* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1994) and Everett Ferguson's *Demonology of the Early Christian World*, Symposium Series, 12 (New York and Toronto: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1984). Both Unger and Ferguson, however, do offer a partisan commentary in their application of demonology to the Christian life.

that is otherwise underdeveloped and often inconsistent.¹⁵ My theory of pure immaterialism, if supportable, is meant to ultimately provide an explanation as to how immaterial beings *appear* to be utterly outside the physical world and yet capable of acting within it. In developing such an explanation, I aim to provide an alternative mechanism that shows how an immaterial demon can effectively interact with this physical world without thinking that they are specially empowered with an ability to manipulate the phenomenal world. I am confident that a philosophically underscored and robust demonology for the conservative believer will, as a consequence, be made intellectually satisfying and shown to be consistent with (if not implied by) the fullest scope of the relevant data. For now it will be necessary for me to clarify just how the interactive mechanism I propose – the crux of my theory – allows purely immaterial demons to be causally effective in this physical world.

3.4 On ‘Mechanism’

There is an important consequence of defining the demons’ constitution as purely immaterial. If demons are devoid of any kind of spatial or physical properties, how can they causally interact with the material world? On the one hand any interactivity between demons and this physical universe would *prima facie* require (in some way or other) some kind of physical medium or vehicle (a proxy that is already, at least in part, ‘in’ this world and interacting with it) as a sort of conduit or translator for demons in order that they may have some kind of self-disclosure and influence in that universe (much like how voice recognition software allows one kind of object, e.g. sound, to interact with another kind of object, e.g.

¹⁵ It was in Chapter 2 that I surveyed a (partial) history of the metaphysics of demonology which consists of portraits that were either in tension with immaterialism or vaguely developed.

written text). Alternatively, as Richard Swinburne imagines, spirits (viz. poltergeists) may have the power to directly manipulate physical objects apart from such a medium.¹⁶ Such a power would be like a human soul's interacting with its own body or something like God's causal interaction with the universe. But that would seem to be true *only if* we could meaningfully justify that the immaterial spirit in question could directly interact with physical objects. This is not hard to imagine if one thinks about the substantial ontology of God. God, as an immaterial divine spirit himself, is essentially omnipotent on most views of classical theism (not the least of which is Christianity). Omnipotence *at least* entails that one can do anything that is logically possible for that agent to do. It is, therefore, understandable that an omnipotent being would be able to create or move objects through resources intrinsic to his nature since it is logically possible for one to have such a power. But why think that the less divine spirits can and do the same thing since the inference to God's power to interact with matter derives not from his ontological spirituality but from his omnipotence? Such power cannot be essential to the nature of a *finite* being (one whose essence would not in any way entail his omnipotence). Accordingly, any attributed potency of this sort to semi-divine spirits would be extrinsic to that spirit, which would therefore only possess it contingently. Since such spirits are not omnipotent, we could not infer from their ontology alone the extent of their power, and certainly not that they had the power to interact with matter.¹⁷ That such spirits would have the ability to interact with matter would have to be an *accidental* power which would allow for

¹⁶ 'It is possible that we might find certain otherwise inexplicable phenomena that could be explained by the action of a non-embodied agent, such as a ghost or a poltergeist' (Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, p. 63).

¹⁷ As Jaegwon Kim has pointed out, purely immaterial spirits (being non-spatial) may lack any sort of causal power and thus be 'lonely souls.' In fact, this is his expectation about unembodied spirits. See Jaegwon Kim, 'Lonely Souls: Causality and Substance Dualism', in *Soul, Body, and Survival: Essays on the Metaphysics of Human Persons*, ed. by Kevin Corcoran (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), p. 36.

one to explain such causal concomitance between spirits and the physical world. Now, there is no reason to think that this scenario is not possible. But any move to rationally accept this conclusion will require justification apart from its merely being possible; and we have already seen that there are no *a priori* grounds based on something like omnipotence to provide any such warrant. Apart from any further argument, what we know so far about the inherent abilities of God, angels, demons, and human beings can be illustrated thusly:

	Spirit-Matter Interaction	Spirit-Body Interaction
God	Yes (because God is omnipotent).	No (no body).
Angels	No (unless God intervenes).	No (no body).
Demons	No (because God would not intervene).	No (no body).
Embodied Humans	No (unless God intervenes).	Yes.
Disembodied Humans	No (unless God intervenes).	No (no body).

We should expect that beings with physical bodies (embodied humans) have their spirits interact with them by having been paired by God. But beings without bodies (God, angels, demons, and disembodied humans) lack such a property. And the only immaterial being that can interact with the physical world is God but this is because he is omnipotent. Any other immaterial being would have to rely on God for any interaction with this world. I take it that demons would not, in their present state, be granted such power from that God. And if God himself physically manifests the angels and disembodied humans as the occasion requires and

does not specially grant them any ability to interact with matter,¹⁸ then there is no reason to suppose that demons have (or would have) been granted such an ability. Someone may claim that angels are given such a power at creation.¹⁹ On the contrary, why think that they are? Perhaps because angels often do manifest in the phenomenal world (sometimes every bit as much as the embodied human).²⁰ But why think the *angel himself* is responsible for the manifestation? This is not how we read the apparition stories of disembodied *human* spirits. Case in point: Samuel's spirit is reported to have become visible and interacted with Saul and the sorceress of Endor in I Samuel 28.11-20, but we no doubt imagine that it was God who made this possible and that Samuel himself lacked any special spirit-matter interactive power in his disembodied state. But on his own, he would not have been capable of the apparition Saul and the sorceress experienced. This leads us to now ask: If demons are indeed incapable of interacting with matter, how can they move men and cause illnesses as acknowledged by a number of those who believe in demons?

I propose that angels, and so demons, have the ability to cognitively interact with other souls and that this constitutes the extent of their ability to interact with others. I take it that if God created all spirits, it is possible that he has not created them in utter communicative isolation from each other. This is not to say that there is *a priori* justification for this ability that would somehow be predicated on their ontology. However, based on the fact that the Bible calls angels 'ministering spirits' (Hebrews 1.14), it is highly probable to suppose that they have

¹⁸ Numbers 22.31, Revelation 7.2-3, and II Kings 6.15-17 all explicitly credit God for the manifestations of the angels.

¹⁹ I.e. Edward P. Meyers, 'Angel', in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. by David Noel Freedman (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), p. 63; Mortimer Adler, *The Angels and Us* (New York: Macmillan, 1982), p. 129; C. Fred Dickason, *Angels: Elect & Evil* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1975), Chapter 2.

²⁰ See Matthew 4.11 and Hebrews 13.2.

the ability to communicate with others.²¹ And when it comes to demons, ability to communicate cognitively is a widely held and uncontroversial view among those who believe in demons precisely because there are unchallenged references to it in the Bible.²² Consequently, those spirits would be capable of *at least* the ability to communicate with God himself (Swinburne is no exception since even he calls such an ability 'basic'²³). I, on the other hand, *do* challenge the *a posteriori* arguments on behalf of the spirit-matter interaction of demons (this I shall do in Chapters 6 and 9). In the case of the ability to communicate cognitively, if it obtained between an unembodied spirit and an embodied spirit, it would provide a proxy for the unembodied spirit through which to affect changes in the physical world.²⁴ The embodied person's spirit would be something of a *medium* for demonic spirits in that they may influence the thoughts of human recipients thereby leading them (the human host) to perform acts with their bodies as objects already in the physical world. I shall argue for the probability of this kind of mechanism in the chapters to unfold. Those who believe demons have the power to interact with physical things will need to weigh my forthcoming objections to their view accordingly. Overall, as all who believe in demons would agree, the search for how demons interact with this world is a search for a viable mechanism to explain their ability to interact with the physical world. Now, my use of 'mechanism' is bound to be misleading since it would *prima facie*

²¹ The angels and the demons are also said to commerce with each other (cf. Jude 9). These evidences, if indisputable, would constitute the highest probability (=1) that such spirits can communicate.

²² See I Chronicles 21.1-2, Luke 22.3-4 (paralleled in John 13.2, 27), and Acts 5.3. I shall have more to say about these passages in Chapter 8, Section 8.2.

²³ Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, p. 130.

²⁴ At this point I should note that one need not commit to anthropological dualism for making sense of this communicability. Perhaps on a materialist view of human beings the mind (or consciousness) is somehow attuned to unembodied beings such that communication is still possible. For readers averse to the extra commitment to anthropological dualism, perhaps one could hereafter read 'soul' or 'spirit' in reference to human consciousness as simply 'mind.' However, one of my arguments in Chapter 5 shall depend a biblical anthropological dualism.

appear to suggest a material apparatus of some sort. But this is not how I am employing the term; indeed, it is not at the core of what constitutes a mechanism *simpliciter*.²⁵ I simply use it as a reference to a means or a structure by which some effect obtains. I shall now discuss the specific nature of the mechanism I have in mind for my theory.

3.5 Cognitive interaction

Having distanced myself from demonological (quasi-) materialism and the prospect of a spirit-matter interaction mechanism, I offer an alternative mechanism that is in keeping with a conservatively realist interpretation of the Bible. I shall begin by defining the particular terms used in this theory.

3.5.1 Terminology: 'Cognitive' and 'Interaction'

There are two individual but conjoined terms associated with my model's specific use of a mechanism (*viz. cognitive interaction*). The first term, 'cognitive', just refers to the conscious intellectual activity bound up in the *res cogitans* of the subject (the entity, or at least part of it).

²⁵ By 'mechanism' I do not mean a physical contraption like a pulley system. Rather, I am employing the concept of a mechanism in accord with William Bechtel and Adele Abrahamsen's definition – that a mechanism is simply 'a structure performing a function in virtue of its component parts, component operations, and their organisation. The orchestrated functioning of the mechanism is responsible for one or more phenomena'. William Bechtel and Adele Abrahamsen, 'Explanation: A Mechanist Alternative', *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences*, 36 (2005), p. 423. Jaakko Kuorikoski explains further that Bechtel and Abrahamsen's definition 'is designed to capture a number of characteristic properties of mechanisms: mechanisms are identified through their causal role or function in some larger system or context; mechanisms are complex entities consisting of parts enjoying at least some amount of ontological and causal independence; mechanisms do what they do by virtue of what their parts do and how the parts interact and, finally, the interaction of the parts is in some sense regular and orderly'. 'Two Concepts of Mechanism: Componential Causal System and Abstract Form of Interaction', *International Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, 23 (2009), p. 145. Such notions of mechanism emphasise function and not substance, much less the *type* of substance in question. It would seem that any concrete objects (or 'entities') could function so as to cause some kind of phenomena (or 'activities') without having to be necessarily composed of matter.

Thinking is presumably a natural power for any mind of a person or higher consciousness, and so I take *cognitive* to be understood in the usual manner as volitional, autonomous intellectual activity. I noted earlier that this is probably something to be expected with created spirits like demons since other created spirits presumably have the same ability. I add to this my doubts that God would create intelligent spirits in utter communicative isolation from one another – particularly if they are (initially) created as ‘ministering spirits.’²⁶ Moreover, the boundaries of one’s activity is to be, *ceteris paribus*, partly determined by the ontology of that person in addition to her will. If the person has a material constitution, I assume that such agents would not be intrinsically forbidden from consuming food since this would be part of one’s usual function if the person is to survive. If they are immaterial, then I assume it would not have that kind of function. Once settled on the ontology of the person, we would now have some idea as to what would constitute the usual kind of communicative boundary available to the person. By virtue of its ontology, an immaterial intelligence would not, *ceteris paribus*, be forbidden or prevented from exercising the activity of mentation. In fact, such activity would be essential for being an intelligence at all. But I note these things only to clarify precisely what I mean by *cognitive* and that I am not delimiting such a concept by one’s *level* of intellectual activity. An individual’s own level of activity is but a *token* or the specific extent to which *that* person can endure mentation as long as they are of the *type* of consciousness with which demons can interact. I understand the cognitive relation to vary from token to token, but in order for that relation to be possible it must essentially be of a certain kind of consciousness such as the one I have noted.

²⁶ Cf. Hebrews 1.13-14.

The second term, 'interaction', is meant to capture the generic prospect of commerce however that might be fully understood. Without a qualifier, it could refer to any intercourse between two or more objects of the same or of different natures. I thus combine 'cognitive interaction' together as specifically delimiting of my view in the following way:

(CI) Person S_1 is cognitively interacting with person S_2 if and only if S_1 is communicating with S_2 through the mental transmission of thoughts and S_1 is *not* communicating with S_2 through any other means of verbal or non-verbal communication.

The definition for CI is meant to permit the correlative interaction of souls on a cognitive level such that S_1 and S_2 might both be thoroughly immaterial, both embodied souls, or one being an embodied soul and the other not. This is to say that a soul's intellectual activity can affect the intellectual activity of another soul. I will make the case that among intelligent substances of the same (or of an analogous) kind, CI shall be seen as basic, viz. fundamental to personal, spiritual agent(s).²⁷ While it may be a basic property, it may not be the only property had by an immaterial agent. But to suppose that some soul has the basic mechanism of CI is simply to accord with our expectations about what these kinds of beings are already said to possess without much dispute. To suppose that they should have a communicative property *apart* from CI, it seems to me, will require new evidence.

²⁷ See Chapter 8, Section 8.2.

3.5.3 Cognitive Interaction as a Mechanism and its Implications

If we take the spiritual status of demons in the simplest way – one that is purely immaterial – then activity by demons in the world will need explaining. I think that this phenomenon can be satisfactorily explained by their exploitation of a certain kind of mind that already that happens to have a body with which to interact with this physical world. I have in mind *human consciousness*.²⁸ All perverse acts said to be caused by demons would be the result of a demon's cognitively interacting with a human mind. Given a human mind's relationship to its body, any control over that agent's mind will permit control over that body. It would be analogous to controlling the movements of Pinocchio, a marionette puppet, by controlling the mind of Geppetto, the puppeteer. Things like adversarial acts of spiritual warfare in the life of the believer, demonic possessions, the direct temptations of the first human parents and of Jesus of Nazareth, and imparted physical maladies in human beings all would (or at least *could*) be accurately said to be genuinely caused by some demon or other. Such a theory would not need to invoke any special ability to interact directly with the physical world.²⁹ The way this would work is that since God has so endowed the human spirit to interact with its own body as that soul's lifelong possession,³⁰ such anthropological dualism is

²⁸ It is not necessary for me to leave out the possibility that demonic interaction can occur with *other* types of consciousness (i.e. animals). I simply refer to *human* consciousness out of convenience for referring to a mind endowed with the necessary cognitive properties (i.e. rationality, volition, and intentionality) sufficient for demonic manipulation on an intellectual level.

²⁹ For my purposes, I am using 'spirit' and 'soul' as synonyms.

³⁰ At the risk of special pleading here for *human* souls, I should note that this ability enjoys *a posteriori* justification on biblical grounds if the Bible teaches that human beings are body-soul composites whose souls interact with their own bodies. I shall also be arguing in Chapter 8 that there is an important distinction between soul-matter interaction and soul-body interaction peculiar to anthropological substance dualism, namely, one of 'pairing.' And it seems awkward to me to consider demonic soul-matter interactions as temporary pairings.

something that can perhaps be exploited by demonic beings who otherwise lack any body of their own.

Supposing for the moment that no human creatures (or other creatures with rational souls) exist now or ever did exist in the history of the universe, the consequence of my theory is that demonic beings would never have made their mark, so to speak, in the physical world. To wit, if some possible world W has autonomous human creatures (or other creatures with rational souls) and W^* does not, and the actual world is the instantiation of W and not W^* , then the actual world is a state of affairs where activity by demons in this world obtains. By contrast, if demons were to have the power to interact directly with material things, both W and W^* would be candidates for demonic activity in this world. On my theory, the explanation for the intra-worldly activity by demons is that the autonomous demons cognitively utilise (or exploit) another creaturely intellect that is itself autonomous in order to interact with the 'victim's' environment. Cast in this way it would appear to somewhat mirror a biological host-parasite relationship. Presumably, the ability to communicate cognitively that leads demons to such parasitic activity in the world is not unusual if one already accepts that comparable beings like angels, God, and deceased saints already have such power.³¹ The advantage of my theory over its rivals is that the mechanism I have in mind here does not need to invoke any additional powers not already acknowledged in the broader Christian *Weltanschauung*. So, how might this work?

³¹ One may consider some principle of mediocrity at work here in that demons are not ontologically unusual vis-à-vis other spiritual entities. This is to say that demons are relevantly just like other created, non-divine souls in lacking mind-nature interactive ability. This gives at least *a priori* grounds for thinking cognitive interaction to be a natural property of demons.

If demons can communicate directly with other minds (particularly if they are similar in constitution, so to speak) and assuming that human thoughts can be averted and stifled at will (which seems to be the case), the demons are bounded by what the host person is able to will for herself. Such manipulation might occur in degrees, everything from being *seductive* to being *coercive*. In the former case, the person is somehow convinced (either emotionally or intellectually) to relinquish a certain amount of control (or utter control) to the alien spirit. In the latter case, it is possible that the alien spirit might overcome and hijack the person's mind for its own complete governing of that person toward some particular task (or of the person altogether). Any boundaries to a person's malleability of will, when it comes to behaviour, would be similar to how my reading an alert message, being authored by another mind, may get me to change my behaviour but not to the extent that it contradicts what I am naturally capable of. Suppose the message reads that there is a gas leak in the neighbourhood and so I will freely (and predictably) evacuate the premises. What the author of the alert message *cannot* accomplish in me or expect is having me suddenly flap my arms and fly to the next city. Accordingly, a demon cannot make a host soul do something beyond that host's total, natural power.

Moreover, the demon's interaction with the host's mind as suggested by the above illustration of an alert message would also be bounded by the host's volition. If I had a death wish at the time of reading the alert message, then that wish, along with the information contained in the message, might affect me in such a way that I choose to not move (for it now becomes an opportunity to commit suicide). In terms of control, the parasitic soul (the demon) could control a certain situation just in case the host's soul could be induced to comply

according to the desires of the parasitic soul. It would be like how a hijacker could manipulate a pilot in control of his plane. While the pilot may directly work the controls in the cockpit, there would be no doubt who was *really* in control of the airplane. The implication is that the more a soul's intellect can be governed by the alien soul's prompting, the more likely there would be an increase in the alien soul's *control* over that mind. Now, this seems to suggest that a certain amount of resistance is possible even if strained (after all, even a hijacking victim can flout the orders barked by her captor if she cares not for her life or the lives of those on board). I think this is correct and well within the parameters set forth above that such control occurs in degrees. To what extent can the demon control his victim? Presumably to the point of possession, viz. total control. Some historical cases of alleged demonic possession give the impression that the demon's cognitive interaction with the victim can potentially be extremely dramatic and quite violent.³² It may even lead to the victim becoming completely overwhelmed against her will. This is possible; but it is equally possible to explain any apparent resistance as one who subjects herself to torture and then reacts violently when the experiences in fact unfold. Either way, demonic interaction can culminate in what appears to be violent resistance by the host as a consequence of having willingly relinquished one's own control.

Lastly, there is another consequence of my theory that may help explain how demons can rightly be accused of causing (some) ailments and illnesses. To begin with, it is apparent that human minds tend to be capable of certain *psychosomatic* results, viz. that the thoughts of the human mind can affect his or her own body in physiological ways. It is a phenomenon

³² I refer readers to the fascinating but tragic case of Anneliese Michel. See Felicitas D. Goodman, *The Exorcism of Anneliese Michel* (Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, 1981).

recognised in professional psychiatry since the early nineteenth century.³³ If human souls endowed with cognitive capabilities can facilitate such interior, psychosomatic effects (something like stress-induced high blood pressure or fantasy-based sexual arousal), then the demon could cognitively manipulate the host mind to bring about similar outcomes normally associated with the host's *own* psychophysically intrinsic powers. If I wanted to make someone *else* depressed (and, so, precipitate a chemical response in her body), I may read aloud Albert Camus's tragic comparison of life to that of the myth of Sisyphus or Arthur Schopenhauer's lament that humanity is but an aggregate of fellow sufferers. Maybe such negative existentialist musings would adversely affect her mind, and so her body. Thus, it would be apparent that I had successfully accomplished the provoking of that desired psychophysical response within her. Anything that would be a putative psychosomatic result in a human person could potentially be a result made possible by the parasitic demon. Demons, then, can indeed cause some physical ailments if *and only if* they are psychosomatic. This is important to consider since those who believe in demons are bound to look at demon-induced illnesses as counterexamples to my model's reliance on mere cognitive interaction.

Having discussed the nature and extent of the sort of interaction I believe demons have with volitional agents in this world, I am prepared to consolidate both *pure immaterialism* and *cognitive interaction* into a composite portrait to be explicated in the next section.

3.6 Sketching Psychodynamic Immaterialism

³³ Thomas N. Wise, 'Psychosomatics: Past, Present and Future', *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics*, 83 (2014), pp. 65-69.

I have chosen to telescope the distinct components of my theory (pure immaterialism + cognitive interaction) into the singular designation 'psychodynamic immaterialism.' Let me first say something about why I have chosen the appellation 'psychodynamic immaterialism' as the general overall header. The second term, 'immaterialism', has already been elucidated above and so no further commentary is necessary. In fact, given the contemporary scene and the prevalence of the Dominican view, this is not necessarily the ultimate point of contention amongst those who believe in demons. 'Psychodynamics', on the other hand, is meant to capture the aforementioned mechanism of demonological activity in the world so described. The term itself is actually a specialised term of psychology and psychiatry and has been closely associated with Sigmund Freud's concept of psychoanalysis. More importantly it is a term utilised more broadly to express how external psychological forces can (usually subconsciously) influence human behaviour, personality, and emotion. Despite its specialised usages in the literature, I am using the language of psychodynamics in a more generic (and perhaps heterodox) way but not wholly unrelated. By 'psychodynamic' I mean the ability of an agent's mind to actively and consciously or subconsciously influence the mind of another (via cognitive interaction) in such a way that there are physical and environmental results – physical in terms of ultimate control over the host soul's body (whether in its movements or its psychosomatic consequences) and environmental in terms of using the individual to cause changes in the wider physical world within the natural reach of that individual. And if another's mind can be influenced in some way (perhaps to move her body to another location or to feel a certain emotion), the influencer would have some form of psychically-driven, dynamic control over that other mind's body (hence, 'psychodynamic' for short). This would be to regard the mind as

something that is an open system when it comes to the potential influence by other minds. *Psychodynamic*, as I am using the term, reflects the spiritual landscape that suggests that a soul is not causally effete and whose causal powers via cognitive interaction can affect a recipient's body within certain boundaries as explicated in Section 3.5. However, I recognise that there may be some souls (such as embodied human souls) that may lack such influential power on another. By contrast, if something like human telepathy and human psychokinesis are non-existent, then embodied human souls would be *psychostatic* or unable to utilise any psychically driven interaction.³⁴ Such ability, however, may not just be a horizontal phenomenon (that one kind of being is psychodynamic but another kind of being is not). Perhaps it is also a vertical phenomenon (which is to say that a being at time t_1 may be psychostatic but be psychodynamic at t_2). For example, assume that my spirit does not cognitively influence the mind of another simply through thought while I am physically alive (t_1). Thus, my spirit would presently be psychostatic. Perhaps upon death (t_2), if my spirit were to move on into an afterlife where I would commune with other spirits, I would no longer be psychostatic but psychodynamic. Thus, to consolidate my definition, a soul that is not psychostatic but psychodynamic is one that has some measure of control (however weakly) over another soul at some time t . If the recipient's soul is embodied, the communicating soul may control the recipient's body, too. And that specific communicative mechanism, as I have defined it, is cognitive interaction.

The overall portrait of psychodynamic immaterialism engenders, then, two distinct but complementary components of my metaphysics of demonology (and so angelology). I now want to say something about how CI is a mechanism that is likely to be the *only* or *exclusive* one

³⁴ Perhaps my use of 'psychostatics' would be another subtle break from its traditional usage, but I imagine it would be used in this context to communicate the *inability* of an agent's mind to interact with another's.

demons are capable of. This is to say that demons can utilise CI but they do not possess any ability to interact directly with material things. Nevertheless, CI is enough (as I shall eventually argue) to account for all of the *explananda* pertaining to the demonic manipulation and control of physical events. And I hope that what this would look like has been adequately established herein.

CI, as I have defined it above, pertains to the ability of one soul to communicate directly with another. Such communicability is psychodynamic such that the communicating soul may influence consciously or subconsciously another soul thus prompting the recipient to either react physiologically (as in experiencing an emotion) or to be (weakly) inclined to adjust her behaviour.³⁵ Such communication that leads to such psychodynamic results would not be through the ordinary use of language (verbal, written, or otherwise) but would only be through direct psychical contact with a recipient (which is simply what I mean by CI). Such communication is exemplified by angels communicating with other angels, God internally and privately communicating with individual human beings, and individual humans telepathically communicating with other humans. When the recipients of such communication change their behaviour in response to it, or if their bodies react to any such relevant prompting, it serves as an example of psychodynamic communication (regardless whether any of these communications would in fact happen). Similarly, it would also pertain to demons

³⁵ This may not be entirely accurate in that there are potentially more aggressive levels of psychodynamics in play. For example, demonic possession may be a *coercive* form of psychodynamics in which case the recipient would not be behaving freely in the libertarian sense. Even if all cases of demonic possession initially begin with the host's consent, the violent nature of some of the victims' self-destructive behaviour would presumably be against the host's ultimate consent in the initial invitation.

communicating with God, angels, and human souls as noted above.³⁶ This would be in contrast to something like verbal chatting on the phone or writing an email since these would not represent any direct line of psychical communication even though such communication can prompt a behavioural change in the recipient. It would also not be an *inanimate* cause in the same sense that a receiving agent might react to a chemical or physical stimulus imposed by the contact of physical (or even spiritual) inanimate substances. Mentation is not a direct material cause, so to speak. And, so, psychodynamics is not psychokinesis, which refers to the ability of a mind to interact with an inanimate or non-intelligent (physical) object in order to change it. Psychokinesis is not a communicative power in the sense of mere information transfer. It should be clear, therefore, that I am employing cognitive interaction along the same lines as telepathy and adding that certain behavioural or physiological effects may obtain as a result. Thus, unlike telepathy, the interactive dynamics of mentation is such that a demon's mind (M_1) can use the mind of another (human) (M_2) to control her physical body (B_2), or some element therein, within her physical environment (E). Suppose M_1 wanted to change something in E . M_1 could not do this directly since M_1 is an immaterial spirit and would *ceteris paribus* be incapable of such a feat. But M_1 could influence M_2 (via CI) to use B_2 in order to bring about the change in E . This is to say that M_1 psychodynamically brings about a change to E .

It should be emphasised that the psychodynamic spirit (or soul) would not circumvent the mind of the receiving spirit but would be operative directly with and through it. Such is the heart of what I have defined as CI. As such, the psychodynamic spirit, like God, can

³⁶ In representing the thought of Dr. Ernest White, Orville S. Walters echoes his interesting sentiment that '[t]he Devil seeks to work evil in man on the unconscious as well as the conscious level'. 'Psychodynamics and the Holy Spirit', *Journal of Religion and Health*, 10 (1971), p. 249. Though Walters ultimately questions the importing of a Freud-Jung psychodynamic framework into theology, I am not using the term in the traditional way envisaged.

communicate not just information content but illustrative content like visions or hallucinations (of course these may not be phenomenally distinct). M_1 could use M_2 in some way to affect, as previously suggested, psychosomatic changes in B_2 . It is already clear that M_2 can effect changes in her own B_2 . For example, she could mentally ponder a tragedy thereby inducing depression and so incite her own body to be lethargic,³⁷ or she could become mentally stressed to the extent that she increases her body's blood pressure. If M_1 wanted B_2 's blood pressure to increase, M_1 could psychodynamically make that happen. In this case, the manipulative spirit does not exercise a special material-interacting power but, rather, that soul would simply *communicate* the stressful situation through the same 'ordinary' means of informational soul-soul communication (CI). M_1 can communicate the reality that M_2 is without a family, abandoned by her friends, and living in isolation. This thought would be reflected upon by M_2 thereby leading her body to physiologically react such that fatigue sets in. Though M_2 's depressing thoughts partially explain her fatigue, M_1 also serves as a partial explanation of her fatigue since without the communicated thoughts of M_1 , M_2 may not have ever become depressed. Suppose that M_1 wanted B_2 to be paralyzed without the use of injury or trauma. M_1 could impart (also through CI) a thought provoking extreme fear. This extreme fear would psychosomatically induce B_2 to become (at least temporarily) paralyzed. If M_1 wanted B_2 to be permanently *and physically* paralysed, M_1 may impart the influential thought of having M_2 engage in behaviour that would lead M_2 to injure her B_2 (perhaps by influencing M_2 to recklessly drive a motorcycle that would predictably lead to a spinal injury). In either case, M_1

³⁷ There are different forms of depression. *Clinical*, or *major*, depression can result from a chemical imbalance in the person's body not precipitated by any thought of tragedy or loss. Ordinary depression tends to result in some people for no *physical* reason but for reasons associated with thinking about tragedy or loss. My reference to a self-induced form of depression has this latter, ordinary form of depression in mind.

would be psychodynamically related to B₂ and E. And in no case would a special interactive spirit-matter power have to be invoked just in case we are seeking the simplest explanation by not adding powers beyond necessity.

Let us consider an analogy to my overall view of psychodynamic immaterialism. The 'back seat driver' is thought to be a person riding in a vehicle she is unable to physically control directly. As such, she cannot control the vehicle's destination. Also consider that she is equally unable to *physically* interact with the driver. Let us say that they are in a limousine separated by a glass shield. However, they have a two-way transmitter with which to communicate. The back seat driver can communicate to the driver her wishes and desires for the driver to change lanes in order for a more efficient commute. This may be enough to influence the driver in reconfiguring her route. But if the driver is stubborn, the back seat driver will have to consider other means at her disposal. Perhaps she can threaten the driver and scare her into a lane change. Perhaps she can exploit the driver's sense of compassion by insisting that remaining in the present lane is similar to a tragic past event in the driver's childhood (that her careless father would always veer into the same lane just prior to violently wrecking the car). And if that failed to work, perhaps she can cleverly and convincingly form sounds with her mouth that give the illusion that they have a flat tire so that a lane change, being inevitable if it is necessary in order to pull over and stop, would obtain. What may be true of the back seat driver might be true of demonic spirits. Though their means of communication would be psychical and not oral, they may be able to cognitively suggest course changes in our lives or even invoke an experiential illusion or two in getting us to behave accordingly. There are purely psychological conditions that can incite a person to hallucinate (perhaps by entering into a trance state or by

meditating). I see no reason why an external mind could not psychodynamically cause a hallucination by influencing the mind of the host. Either way, we may remain ignorant (particularly if it is subconscious) as to whether such communication is demonic, self-derived, or otherwise. We may imagine the back seat driver to be anonymous or a schizophrenic (audible) hallucination of the driver herself and it would not change the driver's response to each communicative attempt. None of this is to say that demons *do* act this way, only to illustrate what they would likely accomplish if they did.

All of this raises a concern that we could never know which, if not all, instances of the thoughts and desires we have may be the results of demonic 'back seat driving.' I do not hesitate to preface that this is not a concern unique to external spiritual influences in general or of my theory of belief in demons in particular. It is a thorn in the side of other metaphysical disputes. For example, philosophers have often debated about the origin of universal ideas. Is the Platonist correct in surmising that ideas derive from some concrete and transcendent Intelligible World impinging on the mind or is the conceptualist correct in supposing that ideas derive solely from the mind *ex nihilo*? Regardless of the various solutions offered by philosophers, I imagine none of this impresses upon us an imminent concern about their true origin. For a theological example, the Bible takes for granted that not all thoughts and desires are our own and may be implanted in us by God.³⁸ Again, this presents no immediate concern. As Leibniz rightly pointed out, there is an ignorance 'of an infinity of small influences upon us of which we are not aware.'³⁹ What would be of crucial concern is whether or not thoughts and

³⁸ E.g. Nehemiah 2.12; Galatians 1.11-12.

³⁹ G. W. Leibniz, 'Conversation about freedom and fate' in *Leibniz: The Shorter Leibniz Texts*, tr. and ed. by Lloyd Strickland (London: Continuum, 2006), p. 98.

ideas – not the least of which may be thoughts and ideas precipitated or caused by demonic influence – should be *constraining*. But if freedom of the will remains possible in light of such influence, as many indeterminists argue, then one cannot conclude merely from the fact of cognitive interaction that my decisions are somehow coerced.⁴⁰ Thus, our inability to determine whether all or any of our thoughts are truly our own is practically inconsequential. But, more poignantly, neither are we obligated to a contrary mistake in concluding that *none* of our thoughts are our own. Such a mystery shall have to be deferred to another day.

3.7 Conclusion

The metaphysical theories of demonological ontology on the historical table are of three categories: immaterialism, materialism, and quasi-materialism. I have surveyed representatives of each in codifying how each attempts to make sense of the metaphysics of demons. But it is apparent that materialism (viz. the view that demons are corporeal, physical creatures of some sort) is hardly a prevalent interpretive theory in pneumatology of this kind. Committed materialists are more likely to abandon belief in demons than they are to accommodate it with an ontology of gross matter for the demons' constitution. This essentially leaves us with the competing metaphysical theories of quasi-materialism and immaterialism. I shall argue that the historically popular quasi-materialism does not adequately explain the ontology of demons on the basis of how they are described – both directly and indirectly – in the Bible and that it is less parsimonious (or simple) overall than immaterialism. I shall also argue that pure immaterialism is a better explanation in its conformity with our philosophical

⁴⁰ It is this concern that has given rise to the popular tongue-in-cheek defence that 'the Devil made me do it' in transparent attempts at self-exoneration.

expectations about 'spirits' along with what the canonical data say specifically about the demons. But if pure immaterialism is true, and (as noted above) one must posit a means whereby demons can interact with the physical world, then such immaterialism will necessarily need an additional explanation to account for such activity. I noted that the usual means of cognitive interaction as a means of communication is already basic to God, angels, and deceased souls. These provide us with at least one way to understand their activity in the world, something that I dub 'cognitive interaction.' Accordingly, my theory has two essential components: That demons are purely immaterial beings and that their interaction with this world is somehow through the more ordinary means of cognitive interaction. And this I collectively call 'psychodynamic immaterialism.'

Psychodynamic immaterialism emphasises the mechanism of communicability with this physical universe obtaining exclusively through the cognitive interaction they, as immaterial spirits, have with human minds – something analogous to the alleged phenomenon of telepathy. Since human minds are in control of their bodies, the human mind serves as the proxy through which the demon exclusively interacts with the physical world (or just with that particular human body).

Now, my theory obviously hinges on a more rudimentary issue, viz. whether there can be such things as purely immaterial spirits. If there is something wrong with either the very concept of the pure immaterialism of persons or any reasons to disavow such a possibility, needless to say CI would not be a candidate for a mechanism of communication.⁴¹ Thus, if the

⁴¹ It should be noted that a denial of CI would not itself rule out *materialist* views of telepathy if demons exist and exist as material creatures. Such person-to-person communicability would be something like the

mere concept of a purely immaterial demon is itself incoherent, my theory will not be able to get off the ground. Therefore, I shall argue in the next chapter that there is indeed neither logical nor metaphysical incoherence in positing things like demons as purely immaterial spirits and so there are no *a priori* reasons for rejecting pure immaterialism. Following that, as belief in demons is discussed within a broader Christian framework, I shall survey the posterior biblical data regarding the demons' ontology as the primary evidence for their immaterialism in Chapter 4. In Chapter 7 I shall defend the coherence of soul-soul communicability apart from any physical medium. I shall argue in Chapter 8 on the heels of the coherence of soul-soul communicability that there are no good reasons to suppose that Satan and the demons have any additional powers like psychokinesis (viz. the magical powers hypothesis) through which to accomplish their various activities in the world. My conclusion shall involve taking all of these premises into account in a cumulative, inductive argument for psychodynamic immaterialism which, as I have explained, engenders the pure immaterialism of persons and their putative ability to cognitively interact with other immaterial persons.

transmission of a signal at such-and-such frequency. But CI proper is not this kind of telepathy. CI is predicated on personal immaterialism and so the two would stand or fall together.

CHAPTER 4

THE COHERENCE OF THE NOTION OF PURE IMMATERIALISM

4.1 Introduction

It is a historical truism that theologians have not always seen the data on demonic incorporeality and spirituality in the Bible to be *ipso facto* declarations of any sort of pure immaterialism like the kind I am championing.¹ As I had previously noted, the doctrine of hylomorphism has sometimes (though clearly not in all cases) been associated with an immaterialist ontology.² The universal hylomorphism of certain immaterialists (like Bonaventure) seems to treat ‘matter’ merely as an essential component for some undisclosed spiritual substratum (viz. the accidental conjunction of an actual and a possible).³ But talk of ‘spirit matter’ or ‘spiritual substance’ smacks of the same conceptual problem as the aerial ontology and it is just not clear what the relevant difference is between a subtly corporeal, aerial substratum and a body made of ‘spirit matter.’ As such, they all just seem like degrees of materialism. Even some of hylomorphism’s proponents among ancient Greeks and the subsequent Eastern Church Fathers of the Christian faith never thought to dissociate corporeality from the spiritual realm.⁴ This much is historically apparent. Consequentially, I wish to stipulate that I do not consider any pneumatic hylomorphism or aerial ontology to be a *pure* immaterialism since I mean to disambiguate my approach as a simplistic, strict denial of

¹ See Chapter 3, Section 3.3.

² See Chapter 2, Section 2.6

³ E.g., Bonaventure. See his *Commentaria in Quatuor Libros Sententiarum* III. 1. 1. 1.

⁴ Tertullian singles out Greeks like Hipparchus, Heraclitus, Hippon, Empedocles, and Critias in his own assertion that the soul is a corporeal thing. See his *De Anima* V. Cicero has called the associations of the soul with physical elements to be ‘common opinions’ among the Stoics. See his *Tusculanae Disputationes* I. 9-10.

any connotation of matter – ‘gross’ or ‘fine.’ I shall thus infer no more than what the data (canonical or otherwise) justify. It might turn out that the only *ultima facie* way to affirm an immaterialist pneumatic ontology is to posit hylomorphism (and, so, not a *pure* immaterialism), but I shall consider in my discussion whether such compromise is necessary to cede in the face of philosophical reflection. In this chapter, I will defend the first of a two-part argument for the demons’ ontology.⁵ I am going to focus on the coherence of immaterialism, arguing that there are no good reasons to think that the very concept of a purely immaterial demon-person is impossible or improbable. It will be the goal of the next chapter to defend the claim that pure immaterialism is the more probable ontology for demons than its rivals.

I shall now elucidate the intention of this chapter. Since my metaphysical theory declares that demons are immaterial, incorporeal souls in the specific sense outlined, then I shall defend the *possibility* that there could be personal, unembodied, immaterial agents we may call ‘demons.’ This will be important to settle in going forward for if it is impossible that there can be such persons, then my theory is conceptually dead on arrival. Now, there are two essential components in (inductively) justifying any explanation. On the one hand, we expect that there be some evidence or observations that confirm the hypothesis in question. This is in support of what we could call the *posterior* probability of the hypothesis. But, before one can explore the relevance of evidence, there must first be some consideration as to the degree of its *initial* (or *prior*) probability. Such probability pertains to the likelihood of such a hypothesis simply given our background information where such a probability is formulated apart from and

⁵ Since my theory is an explanatory theory, I find it appropriate to argue for the coherence of such a theory before arguing for its probability (viz. a natural progression from the *a priori* to the *a posteriori*). Surely if the theory cannot pass the test of coherence then it could never hope to be grounded in any subsequent aggregate of evidence. Even so, I recognise that this chapter could be seen as a preemptory discussion about an objection to my view.

antecedent to any evidential considerations. But the hypothesis must *at least* be possible. The overall probability of the hypothesis will combine both those initial and posterior probabilities in determining the degree of justifiability or probability that the hypothesis in question will possess. The *preferred* hypothesis will possess a probability greater than that of its rivals. My focus here is to argue that there exist no *a priori* improbabilities compared to rival views that could potentially swamp any posterior probability for my theory. In other words, it will be shown that pure immaterialism is no less likely a hypothesis than rivals going into an examination of the evidence. Let us first turn to whether or not the notion of pure immaterialism is an *impossible* hypothesis, the subject of the next section.

4.2 Initial Probability and the Concern over the Conceptual Impossibility of Immaterialism

If one is a materialist but acknowledges that demons exist, then one must acknowledge that demons are material substances. As such, the prior probability of some form of materialism under any modal interpretation would be 1 (or near enough) which is to say that the hypothesis is, in some modal sense, necessary. For most contemporary philosophers – materialists included – they actually do not think that there is anything *logically* incoherent (as in ‘A cannot simultaneously be –A’) in the idea that an existent might be an immaterial substance. Some philosophers in history, such as Epicurus and Thomas Hobbes, have attempted to show such incoherence by attempting to show that ‘immaterial’ tacitly refers to ‘the absence of existence’.⁶ For Hobbes, the notion of an immaterial, incorporeal substance

⁶ Epicurus and Hobbes take ‘incorporeal’ to be similar to how I have defined ‘immaterial.’ Accordingly, their comments about the impossibility of an immaterial spirit rests on their problematic understanding of ‘incorporeal’; See Epicurus, *Letter to Herodotus* VI. 65-67; Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* III. 34. 207-208; III. 34. 211.

that exists is as incoherent as that of a round square. Hobbes says as much when he defines the nature of soul in his section on the 'Christian common-wealth' where such serves as the typology for the secular common-wealth. Hobbes, who later explicitly discusses the demonic world, writes on the nature of substance as follows:

Substance and *Body*, signifie the same thing; and therefore
Substance incorporeall are words, which when they are joined
together, destroy one another, as if a man should say, an
Incorporeall Body.⁷

This conceptual impossibility forces us to reconsider our understanding of

Spirits; as when [some] call that aeriall substance, which in the
body of any living creature, gives it life and motion, [... and that]
some [...] call them *Bodies*, and think them made of aire
compacted by a power supernaturall, because the sight judges
them corporeall; and some to call them *Spirits*, because the sense
of Touch discerneth nothing in the place where they appear, to
resist their fingers: So that the proper signification of *Spirit* in

⁷ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* III. 34. 207-208, *Thomas Hobbes: Leviathan*, ed. by C. B. MacPherson (London: Penguin Books, 1985), pp. 429-30. Describing 'substance' as 'incorporeal' was not previously held to be self-contradictory as we see in, for example, Augustine. Augustine, who lived over a millennium prior to Hobbes, claimed that 'not everything which lacks body is an empty substance'. *De Anima et eius Origine* IV. 18, translated from *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series*, V, trans. by Peter Holmes and Robert Ernest Wallis and ed. by Philip Schaff (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887), p. 362.

common speech, is either a subtile, fluid, and invisible Body, or a Ghost, or other Idol or Phantasms of the Imagination.⁸

Given the etymology of 'spirit' as something often associated with 'wind' we should come to think that spirits

are not Ghosts *incorporeall*, that is to say, Ghosts that are in *no place*; that is to say, that are *no where*; that is to say, that seeming to be *somewhat*, are *nothing*.⁹

In noting some particular passages of relevance in the Bible, Hobbes concludes that the word 'Angel signifieth there, nothing but *God* himself.'¹⁰ But Hobbes himself is quick to confess that there are very compelling reasons to affirm the literalness of the angelic realm,¹¹ and that those beings (as real entities) simply must be corporeal substances:

To men that understand the significance of these words, *Substance*, and *Incorporeall*; as *Incorporeall* is taken not for subtile body, but for *not Body*, they imply a contradiction:

⁸ Hobbes, *Leviathan* III. 34. 208-209, MacPherson, *op cit.*, pp. 429-30.

⁹ Hobbes, *Leviathan* III. 34. 211, MacPherson, *Leviathan*, p. 434.

¹⁰ Hobbes, *Leviathan* III. 34. 212, MacPherson, *ibid.*

¹¹ He later writes, 'I was enclined to this opinion, that Angels were nothing but supernatural apparitions of the Fancy, raised by the special and extraordinary operation of God, thereby to make his presence and commandments known to mankind, and chiefly to his own people. But the many places of the New Testament [...] have extorted from my feeble Reason, an acknowledgment, and beleef, that there be also Angels substantiall, and permanent'. Hobbes, *Leviathan* III. 34. 214, MacPherson, *Leviathan*, pp. 439-40.

insomuch as to say, an Angel, or Spirit is (in that sense) an
Incorporeall Substance, is to say in effect, there is no Angel nor
Spirit at all.¹²

Unsurprisingly, if angels exist then on pain of irrationality they must be corporeal in some way. Hobbes thus writes that 'though [the New Testament] prove[s] the Permanence of Angelicall nature, it confirmeth also their Materiality.'¹³ Believing that the judgement of 'everlasting fire' is reserved for Satan and his demons according to Matthew 25.41, this substantiates the existence ('permanence') of evil angels, and that such infinite judgement would be 'repugnant to their Immateriality; because Everlasting fire is no punishment to impatible substances, such as are all things Incorporeall.'¹⁴

Hobbes' contention that *substance* and *body* are synonyms is the ground for his disavowal of the possibility of there being such a thing as an incorporeal (immaterial) person. By 'substance' he just seems to mean 'materiality.' Thus, to be an incorporeal person means for him that there is a substantial soul (which entails physical attributes) endowed with an intellectual capacity which *ex hypothesi* lacks location (viz. 'Ghosts that are in *no place*; that is to say, that are *no where*'). Thus, he seems to build his case by equating 'incorporeality' with an absence of substance. And if something is not a substance, then of course it does not exist. But his view of 'substance' incorrectly assumes that to be a substance entails that that object – whether person or thing – must essentially possess physical attributes. Perhaps Hobbes is

¹² Hobbes, *Leviathan* III. 34. 214, MacPherson, *Leviathan*, p. 439.

¹³ Hobbes, *Leviathan* III. 34. 213, MacPherson, *Leviathan*, *ibid.*

¹⁴ Hobbes, *ibid.*

thinking of substances as *individuated* things which is, on one interpretation, only achievable through the inclusion of *hyle* ('matter'). Debates about substance have raged since Aristotle, but it is by no means a settled issue that 'substance' should be taken as 'body' – individuated or not. And if one adopts a deflationary account of substance, then she will not easily equate 'body' with 'substance.' What we need from Hobbes is an argument to settle this, and there does not appear to be any. For the vast majority of Christendom, God is a paradigm case of an incorporeal substance (a substance with three individuated egos, incidentally!). It is no wonder that Hobbes rescues himself of a potential inconsistency by calling the substance of God 'incomprehensible.'¹⁵ Even if the evidence were counter to the existence of immaterial substances, it would not show that something like God or a Cartesian ego cannot *in principle* exist.¹⁶ But what about Hobbes's complaint that an incorporeal demon cannot suffer the physical punishment of hell? By way of response, there is nothing about the doctrine of hell that requires a literal understanding of physical torture and, thus, no need for thinking a demon to be capable of such suffering. Not all descriptions of the judgement of hell entail the use of literal fire. The language of fire is meant to perhaps capture in physical terms the strictly emotional torment of one's horrid separation from God.¹⁷ Hence, Hobbes' contention that hell is 'repugnant to their Immateriality' leads one to avoid taking into account non-physical

¹⁵ Thomas Hobbes, *The Elements of Law, Natural and Politic* (London, 1650), XI. 2-3.

¹⁶ I would also add, just as a matter of impartiality on my part, that though I do not think that abstract objects (viz. Platonic Forms) exist, it is quite meaningful to talk about them given that they could *in principle* exist. See Anna Marmodoro, 'Is Being One Only One? The Uniqueness of *Platonic Forms*', *Apeiron: A Journal for Ancient Philosophy and Science*, 41 (2008), pp. 211-227.

¹⁷ Cf. William V. Crockett, 'The Metaphorical View', *Four Views on Hell*, ed. by William Crockett (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), pp. 43-76. In fact, it is becoming increasingly questionable amongst evangelicals as to whether or not the 'fire' of hell isn't just representative of God's destructive judgement such that those persons will literally be annihilated and not subjected to some kind of eternally durative torture. See Edward Fudge, *The Fire That Consumes*, 3rd ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011).

interpretations of the doctrine of hell. By contrast, philosophers are able to talk meaningfully about bodiless minds without any worries that such things, even implicitly, are like square circles or married bachelors.¹⁸ Hobbes leaves us, then, with nothing more than a defence of incorporeality as an incoherent notion predicated on controversial if not overtly false assumptions.

Now the modern difficulty of conceptualising an immaterial thing is certainly not unlike the difficulty of conceptualising certain scientific ontologies within particle physics (consider the Higgs field of the Standard Theory in astrophysics). The so-called *phenomenalistic* approach in philosophy to consciousness is a possible mitigating factor against unremitting materialism. We might say that it is far from *obvious* at least that even an ordinary agential cause such as a *human* consciousness (if one does not eliminate the reality of mental states) must be *prima facie* an embodied thing or at least some kind of physical thing (i.e. a brain state or the vibrating of C-fibers).¹⁹ Most materialist philosophers themselves recognise this point as evidenced by the literature.²⁰ This is why the materialist tends to reject immaterialism on the less forceful grounds that a personal, immaterialist ontology is either *metaphysically* problematic (such that persons cannot be actualised as purely immaterial souls) or not parsimonious.²¹ For example,

¹⁸ Modern philosophers, despite their aversion to any type of dualism, think it quite rational and appropriate to refer to 'immaterialism' (viz., *incorporeality*) as meaningful. For example, see Galen Strawson, *Mental Reality* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994), pp. 107-44. Strawson describes 'immaterialism' as something that is not necessarily purely mental but that immaterialism *simpliciter* 'is not material or physical [... and that] [a]ll it means is "not material"' (pp. 117-8). Strawson goes on to give a very helpful taxonomy of the different types of monistic and dualistic views that one could affirm. But this entails the meaningfulness of incorporeality.

¹⁹ C. Lewy, for example, argues that once we disambiguate what the token 'I' refers to, one can 'understand the supposition that I may exist without a body'. 'Is the Notion of Disembodied Existence Self-Contradictory?', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 43 (1942 - 1943), p. 72.

²⁰ Keith Campbell says it this way: 'any orthodox current materialist "equilibrium" is rather less stable than many suppose'. 'Swimming Against the Tide', *Inquiry*, 36 (1993), p. 176.

²¹ Of the metaphysical problems associated with persons as souls, there are classic objections that include mechanistic quandaries. For example, philosophers of mind often refer to the 'pairing problem' whereby critics of

consider the prominent materialist philosopher of mind, David Armstrong, who forthrightly declares that ‘disembodied existence seems to be a perfectly intelligible supposition.’²² William G. Lycan, an eminent philosopher of mind who ‘cannot take [anthropological] dualism very seriously’,²³ recently confessed the following:

To anyone uncontaminated by neuroscience or materialist philosophizing, the mental does not *seem* physical in any way at all, much less neurophysiological. [...] And now acknowledge the prevalence of weird quantum phenomena. Though there is as yet no theory for Cartesian interaction, microphysics gets more and more bizarre, and indeed itself resorts (on some interpretations of quantum mechanics) to quasi-mental vocabulary. We cannot possibly be sure that no theory for Cartesian interaction will emerge.²⁴

substance dualism argue that the immateriality of souls lacks the necessary properties of being able to causally interact with spatio-physical objects including a soul’s *own body*. But this specific problem attends anthropological dualism and not the metaphysics of intermediary beings for my theory is precisely at a distance from *any* material composition in its ontology. And since I have not yet engaged the arguments of whether angels and demons can and do directly interact with physical objects, then such objections would here be irrelevant to the establishment of unembodied souls *simpliciter*. Feasibly, one could reject substance dualism but cede the metaphysics of demons I espouse. Such a matter regarding interaction with this world will be discussed further in the next chapter and, per my theory, I do not endorse the traditional view that demons directly interact with any physical objects – organic bodies or otherwise. I should also note that Jaegwon Kim’s specific approach to the ‘pairing problem’, as previously mentioned, *is* relevant for he thinks it also excludes the metaphysical possibility of soul-soul commerce (something at the heart of my philosophical demonology). But that is also a matter I shall be taking up in Chapter 7.

²² D. M. Armstrong, *A Materialist Theory of Mind* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968), p. 19.

²³ William G. Lycan, ‘Giving Dualism its Due’, *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 87 (2009), p. 551.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 553 and 558.

Naturalist Thomas Nagel has recently raised the eyebrows of his materialist colleagues by expressing disenchantment with the view that evolutionary biology can and will solve the origin and nature of phenomenal consciousness.²⁵ But Nagel, as with most naturalists who find no appeal in theories featuring immaterial things,²⁶ nonetheless acknowledges: 'I myself believe that though the truth of dualism of mind and body is conceivable, it is implausible.'²⁷

Materialist Jaegwon Kim does not *presume* that an immaterial substance is incoherent *on its face* but famously infers that due to posterior considerations of 'insurmountable difficulties'²⁸ with a soul's causal interaction with another soul or their psychophysical causal efficacy with (paired) physical bodies (at least in the case of human beings), such an envisaged world would only contain immaterial agents existing in causal isolation.²⁹ The problem for Kim, then, is not the actual *concept* of immaterialism (as unsettling as being causally 'isolated' would be) since one can still *imagine* an aggregate of causally effete, immaterial agents with no actual commerce with anything outside of each soul. And since dualistic philosophers are attempting to formulate a doctrine of mind that countenances the ability of consciousness to interact with something else, the problem is only one that takes away from immaterialism as a full and complete explanation of immaterial minds (i.e. Cartesian souls) as causes. But nothing, so acknowledge the materialists, disturbs the mere formal conception of an unembodied,

²⁵ See Thomas Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature Is Almost Certainly False* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

²⁶ Nagel says that for a naturalist to affirm dualism is to 'abandon hope of an integrated explanation' (ibid., p. 49).

²⁷ Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 29.

²⁸ Jaegwon Kim, 'Lonely Souls: Causality and Substance Dualism', *Soul, Body, and Survival*, ed. by Kevin Corcoran (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), p. 38.

²⁹ As Kim suggests, perhaps one might imagine souls living in a Leibnizian pre-established harmony of some sort.

nonphysical mind. And that concession is enough to admit that the idea of demons as immaterial souls is logically coherent for demonological metaphysics to get off the ground.³⁰

In the case where the metaphysics of immaterial persons and not the logic of them is contentious, such critics argue that substance dualism unnecessarily posits an additional substance. Accordingly, dualism comes across as less parsimonious. But to make matters worse, in positing an immaterial soul as the explanatory base of mental activity, there is a fear that one is essentially positing in the common tongue a ‘God-of-the-gaps’ or, in this case, a less-divine ‘soul-of-the-gaps’ kind of extraneous ontology. The positing of an otherworldly soul is itself a mysterious thing. And so it comes off as an attempt to explain some mysterious activity by means of something even more mysterious (an *obscurum per obscurius*). So, if such otherworldly souls do exist, positing them would do no explanatory work.³¹ If demons interact with the physical, why not just posit the simpler and less mysterious ontology that demons are (quasi-) material? It is these particular *a priori* problems that I must now satisfactorily resolve.

³⁰ It is worthy of note to mention that anthropological dualism *simpliciter* is not immediately contrary to materialism. Consider theologian David Rousseau, someone who is happy to uphold a non-Cartesian dualism of matter and ‘mental stuff,’ defends a theory he calls *Naturalistic Structural Dualism*. He defends its naturalistic status by arguing that since such a mental substrate would be, presumably, causally active and spatial; thus, it should be theoretically ‘*analysable by science*, and hence a *natural* stuff’. ‘Understanding Spiritual Awareness in Terms of Anomalous Information Access’, *The Open Information Science Journal* 3 (2011), p. 45; emphases his. This perspective is similar to a view held by naturalist W. V. O. Quine who thought that if spirits existed and we could know about them, then such things would exhibit empirical attributes susceptible to scientific investigation. Refer to his ‘Naturalism; or, Living within One’s Means’, *Dialectica: International Journal of Philosophy of Knowledge*, 49 (1995), pp. 251-261 and *The Pursuit of Truth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

³¹ This is unlike the problem of *overdetermination* in which substance dualists (in anthropological metaphysics) are often accused of supplying two sufficient causes of spatio-physical events (such as the moving of one’s right arm by a conscious thought). But so far I’m simply contrasting *monistic* ontologies and not dualistic ones. Demons are being explored as being either *merely* immaterial or *merely* (quasi-) material based on *a priori* considerations of one sort or another. The only putative theory I am aware of concerning demons as possibly dualistic creatures – bodies animated by souls – is the Bonaventurian theory. Recall that Bonaventure affirms Aristotelian hylomorphism and so demons are dualistic (if one wishes to call it that) composites in that sense. But such a view shall merit an independent discussion that does not regard the current contrast of monistic alternatives. Either way, I do not see the problem of overdetermination to be a problem in considering monistic ontologies.

4.3 Initial Probability and the Alleged Metaphysical Impossibility of Immaterialism

Defences of the existence of the human soul abound in the recent literature on the philosophy of mind.³² While materialism is surely in vogue with today's metaphysicians, there do not seem to be any strictly logical impediments preventing philosophers from speculating about how such a thing (viz. the soul) can possibly exist and interact with its body.³³ All such speculations seem to fall into what Gilbert Ryle has derisively codified as the 'dogma of the Ghost in the Machine.'³⁴ But one thing should be immediately clear: such pro-dualistic defences are almost exclusively devoted to justifications of the existence of a *human* soul.³⁵

Demons are (on my model) considered to be purely immaterial spirits endowed with consciousness and (presumably) an enduring identity for the continuity of their personhood, however that might be anchored. Despite materialist objections being aimed primarily at the

³² For examples, see Richard Swinburne, *Mind, Brain, & Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) and *The Evolution of the Soul*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); David H. Lund, *The Conscious Self: The Immaterial Center of Subjective States* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2005); J. P. Moreland and Scott Rae, *Body & Soul: Human Nature & the Crisis in Ethics* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000); William Hasker, *The Emergent Self* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999); John Eccles and Karl Popper, *The Self and Its Brain: An Argument for Interactionism* (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 1997); Stewart Goetz, 'Dualism, Causation, and Supervenience', *Faith and Philosophy*, 11 (1994), pp. 92-108; John Foster, *The Immaterial Self: A Defence of the Cartesian Dualist Conception of the Mind* (London: Routledge, 1991); Charles Taliaferro, 'A Modal Argument for Dualism', *Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 24 (1986), pp. 95-108.

³³ John Perry, a self-proclaimed 'antecedent physicalist', sums up the usual sentiment thusly: 'The problem with commonsense dualism is not inconsistency but that the arguments for it [...] are simply not compelling in the face of arguments against it'. *Knowledge, Possibility, and Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), p. 79.

³⁴ Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1949), p. 22.

³⁵ Many of dualism's detractors have generally levelled their criticisms against the plausibility of the mechanism of mind-body interaction (a feature unnecessary in my theory as demons do not have bodies with which to interact). This is a significant preface to my discussion here since I need not rehearse those defences of how a soul or mind can interact with its body since my theory is precisely to describe souls that do *not* interact with any material body. Objections to mind-body interaction would be red herrings in my defining and defending of demons as purely spiritual creatures. Such a stance is surely inconsequential to the core beliefs of the Abrahamic faiths, even those beliefs that include the prospect of intermediary beings whose interaction with this world is arguably non-physical. Since I am only interested in the *a priori* plausibility of an unembodied soul *simpliciter*, I thereby excuse myself from this bit of controversy and leave it to the anthropological dualists and materialists to settle.

notion that humans can be disembodied souls in a meaningful way, some of those discussions are relevant to the notion of intermediary beings as they pertain to the more general problem of the *unembodied* existence of souls. I take it the only relevant difference between an unembodied soul and a disembodied soul is that a disembodied soul has the additional property of having once been embodied. Beyond that distinction, any unembodied souls would presumably share all of those properties of mental activity in common. As a result, there have been two categories of criticism that have been raised against positing the existence of unembodied souls. The first category of criticism offered by materialists pertains to how the earlier stages of a self (however that might be defined) can be identified with its later stages without being confused with another self (*viz.* the problem of the *continuity* of the self). The second category of criticism by materialists pertains directly to the problem of the metaphysical conception (given all that we know) of an existing, immaterial self apart from some real dependence on a (quasi-) material ontology. The literature is indeed already replete with various defences of how a purely immaterial thing bearing mental or psychological properties can maintain an enduring identity and a non-physical base. In support of the metaphysical possibility of an unembodied soul, I shall now turn to traditional objections offered in each of these categories. Accordingly, I will highlight those philosophical reasons that would placate materialist concerns that do indeed have a direct bearing on a conservative belief in demons.

4.3.1 The Challenge of Personal Identity

The first category of criticism – the problem of the continuity of the self – concerns a sufficient means of affording possible identity to any given demon-self as it endures through a

succession of temporal events $t_1, t_2, t_3, \dots t_n$ (where t_1 represents the first moment of the demon-self's existence and t_n represents the last)³⁶ in the demon's biography. Some materialists would argue that bodily continuity provides a sufficient basis on which to ground personal identity. But counterexamples seem to arise at every turn thereby making materialist considerations of this sort inconclusive (and I will not rehearse them here).³⁷ One thing seems evident, at least for the theist, is that God is an ostensive case of an immaterial thing that retains its identity. While the theist may not *know* how such unembodied identity endures, she surely believes *that* it does with God.

I submit that we are under no *a priori* obligation to think that materialism provides the essential basis for personhood. Moreover, if God exists as an immaterial being himself, then *a fortiori* the theist has an additional reason to think that materiality is not essential to personal identity. It may very well be the case that no criteria for an enduring personal identity are even possible, but this would not necessarily undermine the coherence of essentially being an immaterial soul.³⁸ As Trenton Merricks comments, '[i]t is consistent to maintain that criterialism is false and that persons [...] have essential properties.'³⁹

But something positive needs to be said about the prospect of a purely immaterial subject as the essential locus of the self with enduring identity. I surmise that a necessary attribute for being a person is for it to be a concrete thing that is distinguished from abstracta

³⁶ Even if the demon-self should be immortal, one could easily imagine t_n to then see it as representing an open-ended maximal numeral, like infinity, to refer to some immensely distant future moment.

³⁷ Stephen E. Braude, 'Personal Identity and Postmortem Survival', *Social Philosophy and Policy*, 22, (July 2005), pp. 226-249; Robert Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), pp. 27-70; Richard Swinburne, 'Personal Identity', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 74 (1973 - 1974), pp. 232-240; Richard Gale, 'A Note on Personal Identity and Bodily Continuity', *Analysis*, 29 (1969), pp. 193-195.

³⁸ For critiques of theories of identity, see Lund, *The Conscious Self*, pp. 195-246.

³⁹ Trenton Merricks, 'There Are No Criteria of Identity Over Time', *Noûs*, 32 (1998), p. 118.

(as a Cartesian, Foster offers the appellation ‘subjectness’ and ‘selfhood’ as suggestions for identifying the immaterial, basic subject of human persons⁴⁰). This nature would at least ground or possess various attributes like consciousness, enduring identity, personality, thinking, reasoning, contemplating, imagining, etc. Consider now a thought experiment like that of John Locke’s ‘intelligent rational parrot.’⁴¹ Locke imagines that some random non-sentient animal, like a parrot, might possibly come to possess the accidental properties of being rational and intelligent. In this case it would have no properties that would make it *human* but it would have properties that might nonetheless make it a *person*.⁴² Perhaps the same could be said about artificial intelligence and the prospect that a machine might eventually acquire a level of consciousness such that it, too, becomes a person. Immaterialism certainly makes it more palatable to see ‘selfhood’ in things other than human beings in that the self transcends its contingent material constitution (if it has one). In those thought experiments where small portions of the brain are replaced piece-by-piece over time,⁴³ it is the immaterialist who can secure a common-sense interpretation that the self continues or endures despite the body having been gradually replaced by a completely different material constitution. Certainly the

⁴⁰ Foster, *The Immaterial Self*, p. 234.

⁴¹ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* II. 27. 8, in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. by Kenneth P. Winkler (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1996), p. 138.

⁴² The unsatisfactory part about Locke’s identification of the self (whether human or rational parrot) is that he remains ignorant about just what that is. The Lockean self *just is* a material substratum – a substratum that grounds the exemplification of psychological properties.

⁴³ For example, William G. Lycan talks about ‘a normal human being’ named Henrietta who undergoes microsurgery to have all of the neurons of her brain gradually replaced by neuron-like prostheses. The results would not, according to Lycan, cause her to lose consciousness or her personality. Despite such an overhaul with synthetic parts, Lycan insists that it ‘is hard to imagine how the boor, or any other chauvinist, would be able to draw a line and state with assurance that after the *n*th operation, Henrietta ceased to have a phenomenology (whatever she may think to the contrary)’. ‘Qualitative Experience in Machines’, in *The Digital Phoenix: How Computers are Changing Philosophy*, ed. by Terrell Ward Bynum and James H. Moor (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), p. 174. Swinburne uses a similar theme and argues that ‘for many possible replacements of brain parts it is logically possible that the replacements take place and the person remains the same’ thus implying that the ‘preservation of certain brain parts is neither logically necessary nor logically sufficient for personal identity’. *Mind, Brain, & Free Will*, p. 155.

nature of 'subjectness' might not be particularly clarifying in terms of helping us to imagine what this kind of thing is. However we, as humans, are beings that are each attached to a body – being immersed in a spatio-temporal universe of materiality. As such, we might just be as the man who suddenly realises he has been sitting on a fortune in valuables but cannot grasp what 'being wealthy' is like having been entrenched in poverty his entire life. Something like 'subjectness' would be the substantive anchor for that entity's various psychological properties (i.e. memories, knowledge, intelligence, emotions, etc.). And since it is somewhat apparent to see how such things can and do endure (even if certain things, like memories, might fade), this seems like a reasonable self-contained theory for how one can be a person without having to also be material. As for Foster, he believes to have established in his book the conclusion 'that mental items are attached to basic subjects and that basic subjects are wholly non-physical.'⁴⁴ And if that is so, then positing a basic subject (viz. 'subjectness') that would accommodate this will offer the immaterialist a way to envisage 'subjectness' as the enduring possessor of psychological qualities while being substantially distinct from any material corpus. At least we can conclude that an immaterial ego so conceived is logically and metaphysically possible, and is referentially meaningful as a means to pick out the self apart from material properties. As a means of explicating a demonological ontology, it suffices to show that this conclusion renders my theory at least coherent.

Let us now consider whether it is possible to be individuated as an immaterial person. It may be that though an enduring self can be an immaterial person, it may yet not be metaphysically possible to be an immaterial person *distinct* from other enduring selves.

⁴⁴ Foster, *ibid.*, p. 231.

4.3.2 *The Challenge of Individuation*

If there are souls that are purely immaterial and have separate identities, then on what basis would they be individuated from each other since no appeal can be made to the obvious material boundaries provided by gross or fine matter? And if immaterial souls in general cannot be individuated, then how can *demons* subsist apart from any matter with which to be differentiated one from another?

I turn, first, to a solution offered up by Aquinas. His view is a possibility if and only if one is not squeamish about adopting a strong Platonism. Let me explain. Aquinas is quite aware of the implications of Bonaventurian hylomorphism when it comes to his understanding of different angels (like Gabriel and Michael). For Aquinas, angels, as subsisting forms, would be *universals* and so ‘the angels cannot be many in one species.’⁴⁵ On his view, declaring something as an ‘angel’ is tantamount to identifying something as ‘humanity’ or ‘whiteness.’ Just like there could not be any individuating of or means of speciation within ‘whiteness’ or ‘humanity’, neither can there be more than one species of the same angelic nature so understood.⁴⁶ Aquinas’s solution to the problem of intra-angelic distinction is to posit each angel *as its own species*. This will accommodate not only the criticisms wrought by Bonaventure’s insistence on *universal* hylomorphism (viz. that all created intelligences must, of some sort of necessity, be a hylomorphic composition), but it also accommodates the biblical data as to the multiple species of angels (and demons) that are both explicitly and implicitly

⁴⁵ Ibid.; Also see Keck, *Angels and Angelology*, p. 98.

⁴⁶ *De Spiritualibus Creaturis* I. 22.

said to exist in numerical separation.⁴⁷ Unfortunately, the Thomistic solution evinces a Platonism of universals. In what way, for example, would whiteness be ontologically different from ‘Gabrielness’ except to arbitrarily designate the latter as something that exists and the former as something that exists, say, only in the mind of God? If one is prepared to commit to Platonism, the Thomistic solution would appear to do the trick. Nonetheless, it may not, according to Nathan Jacobs, avoid ‘the basic category error of labelling a universal a particular.’⁴⁸ Regardless, few are prepared to commit to Platonism and so, Jacobs argues, there remains a lethal problem for Thomism. Let us turn to his brief criticism now.

Jacobs asks us to consider a computer (called ‘Computer 1’) that has a particular game (*Adventure to Mars*) installed on its hard drive.⁴⁹ The computer analogously represents the *hyle* (or material body) and *Adventure to Mars* the *morphē* (or the soul). To say that the soul is removed from its material body is akin to the removing of *Adventure to Mars* from its hard drive. Jacobs then asks the salient question, ‘Would the instance of *Adventure to Mars* on Computer 1 continue to exist? Clearly not.’⁵⁰ Similarly, once a human soul is removed from its body, it simply does not exist just in case Platonism is not true. However if souls do exist Platonically, Jacobs confesses, one may attempt to differentiate individual souls by appealing to

⁴⁷ For example, the Bible seems to suggest an angelic hierarchy in its specific mentioning of an ‘archangel’ (see I Thessalonians 4.16; Jude 9) as well as the classifications (genera?) of ‘cherubim’ and ‘seraphim’ (see Genesis 3.24; II Kings 6.2; 19.15; Psalm 80.1; 99.1; Isaiah 6.2-6; 37.16; Ezekiel 10; 11.22; Hebrews 9.5). Also, it has been suggested by some theologians (like Louis Berkhof) that the appellations of ‘rulers,’ ‘principalities,’ ‘dominions,’ and ‘powers’ denote some sort of angelic (and demonic) ranking system that God is said to be over (see Colossians 1.16; 2.10; I Peter 3.22; Ephesians 1.20-21; 6.10). And Satan himself is said to be the chief over his demons (Revelation 12.9).

⁴⁸ Nathan A. Jacobs, ‘Are Created Spirits Composed of Matter and Form?: A Defense of Pneumatic Hylomorphism’, *Philosophia Christi*, 14 (2012), p. 93.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

John Scotus' notion of *haecceitas* (the 'thisness').⁵¹ On this view, an angelic soul gets individuated simply by being *this angel* as opposed to being *that angel* – a solution capitalised on by contemporaries like Swinburne and Plantinga.⁵² Despite any mutation of accidental properties a soul may bring about, the soul would still essentially be *this* soul and not *that* one.

Let us now consider another way to differentiate two immaterial souls. It seems to me that if private, subjective states are accepted as an epistemic means of differentiation between subjects, then the point of view had by each soul should constitute sufficient grounds for accepting its individuation from another soul apart from a material ontology. For example, suppose that the angel Gabriel is a purely immaterial soul. Could not Gabriel rely on his first-person awareness that his experiences are his own and do not belong to, say, Michael? Gabriel may remember that he once spoke to Zechariah,⁵³ but he will never get confused as to whether he was the one who fought with the Prince of Persia (the one who did was Michael).⁵⁴ If one asked Gabriel on what basis he is not Michael, it is doubtful that Gabriel would have to appeal to a material or quasi-material constitution he did not have in order to be justified in making the distinction. Subjective states are sufficient for *someone*, namely Gabriel, to individuate himself from Michael even if no one else can. Now it may be objected that I am just begging the question here, specifically, that I am already assuming that there is no material distinction that renders it possible for Gabriel to have subjective states different from those of Michael. After all, awareness of one's own subjective states is just a criterion for identifying whose states

⁵¹ John Scotus, *Lectura* II. 3; *Ordinatio* 2. 3. For a thorough commentary on Scotus's *haecceity*, see Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, II (New York: Doubleday, 1993), pp. 511ff.

⁵² See Swinburne, *Mind, Brain, and Free Will*, Chapters 1 and 6; Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), Chapter 5.

⁵³ Luke 1.11-20.

⁵⁴ Daniel 10.10-21. It was Michael who did so.

those are. One could easily argue that if Gabriel is not constituted by any matter, he would not have subjective states that he could differentiate from Michael. Given that he does have different subjective states, he must be constituted by matter.

However, it is not question begging since the solution I am offering above is one of modality. Let me clarify. It remains *possible* or *conceivable* to be Gabriel (or to be the possessor of Gabriel's experiences) and not Michael even though neither may be constituted by matter. There is nothing about Gabriel's subjective criterion for self-identity apart from Michael's that necessitates a material individuation. Such modality would be purely epistemic and not metaphysical, which is to say that, *for all he knows*, Gabriel's own subjective experiences are not Michael's. There is a feature about Gabriel's subjective experiences we are not fully considering here, namely, that there is a special kind of knowledge had by Gabriel that makes it *impossible* for him to be confusing himself with Michael. This can be seen by putting the experiences of Gabriel and Michael in the present moment. Gabriel, for all he knows, knows that he is not *now* fighting the Prince of Persia but is speaking with Zechariah. Michael is experiencing fighting the Prince of Persia now and not speaking with Zechariah. Gabriel *cannot fail to know what he is experiencing and is not experiencing* and so has that important differentiating property – the awareness of not being the one who is fighting the Prince of Persia. Since Gabriel can be certain that he is not experiencing fighting the Prince of Persia, he can put this forward as what seems obvious: I am not Michael. Given the impossibility of confusing the two subjective experiences, no *posteriori* identification of Gabriel with Michael can ever be successfully made. And this means that the individuating of the two angels is accomplished wholly apart from any kind of material substratum. The only way I see out of this

conclusion is to deny that *anyone* owns subjective experiences, viz. a Humean no-ownership view of consciousness. But since such views have already been critiqued in the literature, I defer to those criticisms.⁵⁵

Suffice it to say, there are no good philosophical reasons to insist on a material composition in order to differentiate unembodied souls. Individuation of souls is preserved simply by being ‘this’ soul and not ‘that’ one; and that private, subjective states confirm how individuation can be confidently maintained apart from matter. Let us now turn to another important challenge in that the Bible would appear to treat the realm of unembodied souls as existing in a ‘place’.

4.3.3 The Challenge of the Bible’s ‘Spatialising’ of Unembodied Souls

Important for those who take the biblical data at face value, it is curious that deceased human beings – as unembodied souls – are said to be located in some sort of space, viz. Hades. I return to Jacobs who takes notice of the language of spatiality used in scriptural descriptions of Hades as the abode of deceased human beings. If souls are spatially related to one another, and only (quasi-) material things can be spatially located, then souls must be (quasi-) material. The implications for demonology are subtle: if any kind of unembodied souls is treated spatially, this may suggest that demons, sharing the same ontology, may be (quasi-) material as well. According to scripture, unembodied *human* souls are treated spatially; hence, demons may be (quasi-) material.

⁵⁵ See P. F. Strawson, *Individuals* (London: Routledge, 1964), Chapter 3; David H. Lund, *The Conscious Self*, Part I.

Jacobs says that ‘the very concept of the intermediate state entails that the disembodied soul retains location and situation.’⁵⁶ Why does he think this? Because ‘Christ identifies Hades as a place (*topos*) in Luke 16:28.’ Philosophers just take it that being purely immaterial is a sufficient condition, *ceteris paribus*, for being non-spatial.⁵⁷ But if that is the case, then if unembodied souls are spatially located somewhere (i.e. Hades or some other undefined, intermediate state), then they would not be immaterial. Such a move would also have profound implications for God’s own omnipresence (something Jacobs is happy to concede).

I suppose one could say that such spatial designations are simply due to the fact that God will re-embodiment disembodied souls in a uniquely created environment with bodies unlike those they will ultimately have in the eschatological resurrection of all believers. That God might do this in no way entails that such re-embodiment is *necessary for individuating souls*, however. And so what we would have in passages like Luke 16 are descriptions of how things *will* be, not how things *must* be. More importantly, it is questionable whether such passages truly speak of spatiality at all. Being the central point here, are there good reasons to think that

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ See, for example, Joshua Hoffman and Gary Rosenkrantz, *The Divine Attributes* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), pp. 39-41. Emily Thomas contests this entailment in her response to Hoffman and Rosenkrantz in ‘The Spatial Location of God and Casper the Friendly Ghost’, *Think*, 8 (2009), pp. 53-61. Thomas argues that thought experiments show how it’s possible that Cartesian souls might conceivably be spatially located in a way similar to how ghosts are imagined to be. Thomas acknowledges that ghosts are not gaseous objects – thereby making them subject to atmospheric conditions and such – but bear all of the localizing properties of an ordinary object excepted by the fact that they are ‘completely invisible and incorporeal’ and nothing like ‘gasses or massless particles’ (pp. 57-58). As such, ‘the possibility of ghosts tends to imply that they *would* have spatial location’ (p. 60). I think Thomas is just imagining, in a circular way, souls to be (*quasi-*) *material* objects and is projecting those properties onto purely immaterial subjects. For me, ghosts just are not souls in the sense I’ve described them and so Thomas seems to be confusing the latter with the former. This would be like my imagining seeing something invisible like a musical note – imagining that it looks like a floating black golf club – and pressing for the possibility of the visibility of notes while maintaining that such notes just lack any visual frequencies that would otherwise make them visible. Thomas’ overall mistake is modal: one cannot derive a metaphysical possibility merely from a strict logical possibility.

the *topas* of Hades is to be taken literally here? I think not. Obviously it is challenging to understand what kind of *topas* we are to imagine if it pertains to the immaterial. It is the case that in the Bible the vocabulary of locale is often used as a *façon de parler* in referring to what are literally non-geographical things as people do today such as a parent's saying to their child, 'Son, you should know your place!' by which the parent does not mean that there is a literal geographical province dedicated to his/her son. A Biblical example of the non-geographical use of *topas* occurs in the case of the two apostolic candidates who were vying to 'take the place (*topon*)' of Judas Iscariot (Acts 1.24-25). But, Jacobs might retort, such a usage is in the minority for in the vast majority of New Testament texts *topas* takes on a rather unequivocal geographical meaning. And this says nothing about the *other* spatial designators found apart from using *topas* in Luke 16: 'Lazarus [...] is comforted *here*' (v. 25) and '*between* us and you a great chasm has been fixed' (v. 26). But this need not be a problem for considering *topas* to be non-geographical.⁵⁸ It is not uncommon for spatial descriptions to be used in a way that does not suggest a coordinate location of a physical subject. John Jefferson Davis introduces the concepts of '*impingement* and *reception spaces*' which, he says, semantically designate the phenomenon that local contact with a subject need not be 'molecular' (this is Davis' way of describing a material boundary to some object).⁵⁹ He clarifies:

The notion of impingement that suggests a "coming upon from without," is introduced to call attention to the fact that the

⁵⁸ I am overlooking the easy objection that this story is parabolic and unlikely to be a straightforward, literal description of an otherworldly state.

⁵⁹ John Jefferson Davis, 'How Personal Agents are Located in Space', *Philosophia Christi*, 13 (2011), pp. 437-438.

contact, presence, and influence of one subject or agent is not limited to a “molecular” mode of contact. However, when my cell phone rings and I answer the call, a molecular object (the cell phone) is a “reception space” that is in contact with a nonmolecular, invisible, yet very real entity: the electromagnetic radiation that is carrying the message.⁶⁰

If we imagine the state of Hades in the description laid out for us in Luke 16 to be different from how Jacobs describes it, perhaps such a community of persons is but a ‘reception space’ for inter-agential commerce.⁶¹ This suggestion is not a mere *ad hoc* move to force consistency with the use of *topas* of unembodied persons since such a designation fits well with similar spatial indicators being employed of clearly non-spatial things elsewhere in the New Testament (all emphases are mine):

‘[B]ehold, the kingdom of God is *in the midst* of you’ (Luke 17.21)

‘But I know that you do not have the love of God *within you*’ (John 5.42)

⁶⁰ Davis, ‘Personal Agents’, p. 440.

⁶¹ Richard Swinburne, for example, doesn’t use ‘reception space’ but simply speaks of spiritual location as being ‘at the place where [the spirit] interacts with [the physical] world’ (*Mind, Brain, & Free Will*, p. 173). But his discussion pertains to how spirits would have location *in this world* and so serves as a *sufficient* designation for spatial localisation. Since Hades is *otherworldly* in its being utterly immaterial, Davis’ nomenclature better captures this thought into a non-physical context while in no way compromising the fact that human souls might have location in the Swinburnian sense, viz. an accident of intra-worldly souls.

'Believe me that I am *in the Father* and the Father is *in me* [...]'

(John 14.11)

'Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit
dwells in you?' (1 Corinthians 3.16)⁶²

The Old Testament is also replete with spatial terminology of a 'nonmolecular' nature:

'[...] the Spirit of God was *hovering over the face of the waters.*'

(Genesis 1.2)

'[...] the man and his wife hid themselves *from the presence of the
LORD God* among the trees of the garden' (Genesis 3.8)

'[God's] abode has been established in Salem, his *dwelling place
in Zion*' (Psalm 76.2)

In fact, we are told outright that the spatial attributions, when used of God in particular, *cannot* be molecularly circumscriptive:

⁶² At this point someone might object and say that I have begged the question. Why *not* think of God's dwelling *in* me as a literal spatialisation? For one, God would need to be awkwardly understood in Davis' 'repletive' sense (viz. being spatially diffused *everywhere*; see Davis, 'How Personal Agents', p. 438) since the dative pronoun 'you' of I Corinthians 3.16 is plural (*umin*). Secondly, things like 'love' (cf. John 5.42) are surely not located in any 'molecular' or 'repletive' sense for love is not likely a concrete substance (as in 'the love of God is 12 millimetres from your left lung').

‘But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, *heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you*; how much less this house that I have built!’ (1 Kings 8.27).

It is easy to see that such spatial references are likely devoid of any literal geographical considerations. And if that is true, then we are under no obligation to deny that Hades – if taken at face value – might just be a ‘reception space.’ Perhaps Hades allows the intelligences to commerce in a way analogous to how ‘cyberspace’ operates to bring two subjects ‘into’ a social media venue (like Facebook or chat rooms) for any such interaction.⁶³ Hades might just be the Facebook of the intermediate state.

Jacobs could retort that the historical understanding and context of Hades is indeed one of geography. After all, the intimating of Greek concepts is the backdrop in understanding Jewish conceptions of the intermediate state, and Hades was well-understood to be a geographical province in Greco-Roman views of the afterlife. Hades was considered to be a shadowy abode somewhere in a large cavity under the earth where the deceased (or their surviving *psuchē*) would descend. However, as New Testament scholars have come to appreciate, very little of the Grecian views reflected in its literary poetry (i.e. Homer’s *Odyssey*) are meant to fully elucidate what first-century Jews meant in using such familiar terminology. For example, according to familiar versions of Hades, a person’s *psuchē* after the body’s death would be ferried over a river by a boatman (Charon) and then taken to the other side to a place

⁶³ Davis himself uses this analogy. See *ibid.*, p. 439.

fortified by a three-headed dog (Cerberus). There, each *psuchē* would await judgement and, in some cases, sent to one of its sections of reward or confined to the section containing the abyss of Tartarus. This portrait looks nothing like Jesus' usage in Luke 16 which features a rich man who is straightforwardly condemned to conscious torment by fire in Hades (vv. 23-24). As for the deceased Lazarus, he is carried by angels to Abraham's 'bosom' (*kolpon*)⁶⁴ and is separated from the offending rich man by a 'great gulf' (*chasma mega*, v. 26). The English use of 'Hades' along with its capital letter 'H' is bound to be misleading here. In the Septuagint, the term *hadēs* is a generic word for the mysterious post-mortem conditions of mankind often represented by *she'ol* in Hebrew. According to Jonathan Lunde, the Greek translators of the Hebrew Old Testament did not use *hadēs* just for *she'ol* but also they used it to translate other otherworldly terms like 'darkness' (Job 38.17), 'silence' (Psalm 94.17), 'death' (Proverbs 14.12; 16.28; Isaiah 28.15), and 'the pit' (Isaiah 38.18; 14.19).⁶⁵ Apparently such Jewish descriptions of the afterlife were so vague that there subsequently 'was no uniform Jewish doctrine in the New Testament period concerning the afterlife.'⁶⁶ Analogously, consider how Zeus is said to reside on a mountain (Olympus). I doubt that Jacobs would think of correlative references to God sitting on a mountain (Psalm 9.11) to be taken geographically simply because it parallels the Homeric epics. As such, there should be no expectation that the incidental reference to *hadēs* in the parable in Luke 16 is in any way understood to shoulder the same connotation it has in Greco-Roman mythology. And if there are enough important differences between them, then perhaps having geography is also among those differences. Therefore, when differentiating

⁶⁴ Whether this *kolpon* it is somewhere beyond *hadēs* or a part of it is unclear.

⁶⁵ J. Lunde, 'Heaven and Hell', *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. by Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), p. 309.

⁶⁶ Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), p. 554.

one soul from another, the Bible does not always use spatial terms literally, and thus there is no implication that souls are in space, or therefore that they are material. And if that is the case, then demons can also be differentiated without being material.

Therefore, there is no reason to suppose that unembodied spirits have a (quasi-) material nature on theological grounds. The biblical references to Hades as a *topos* is not necessarily of a 'molecular' locale due either to etymological considerations or a conceptual ancestry in Greco-Roman mythology. But even if it were, it is not clear that a spatial intermediary state exists by necessity rather than by desire. Thus, if there are no further *a priori* concerns requiring us to interpret demonic ontology as (quasi-) material, then we have no reasons to think them to be (quasi-) material; and, therefore, we have no reason to deny that being a purely immaterial spirit is a live metaphysical option even for scripture. But even if all of the metaphysical challenges to pure immaterialism fail, perhaps there is no way for an immaterial spirit to know things. And if it cannot know things, then it may live an existentially bleak life. To this point we now turn.

4.3.4 The Practical Challenges of Being an Immaterial Person

I have argued thus far against the stronger notion that materialism (of one sort or another) is a necessary ontology in order to ground the enduring identity of persons; that materialism (of one sort or another) is not essential in individuating distinct centres of self-consciousness; and that materialism (of one sort or another) is not essential in explaining the scriptural 'spatialising' of unembodied souls. Ironically, materialist philosophers do tend to speak of having some kind of body as an essential component of being a human person or, at

the very least, a centre of human self-consciousness. But their speculation is limited to *known* persons (or subjects that are centres of self-consciousness) for two reasons. First, some materialist philosophers are Christians and believe that there are things such as God and angels that exist as purely immaterial creatures.⁶⁷ Accordingly, these would be indisputable cases of one's having a centre of self-consciousness and not requiring a body. Secondly, speculations about the necessity of having a body pertain to how correlative certain physical states are with mental states. But such correlations are decisively about *human* consciousness and not about any other kind of consciousness. As the argument goes, since no mental state *in human beings or any other known animal creatures* appears to obtain in isolation from some corresponding neurophysiological state, the supposition is that the human's (or animal's) neurophysiological state is, for all we know, essential in the having of the corresponding mental state. We know nothing of 'spiritual neurophysiology' (or whatever word we may use to describe the intricacies of a spiritual nature) of the immaterial self. On this score, the mere possibility of having an immaterial self as the seat of consciousness remains a real possibility. So, there would appear to be no *de facto* challenges to an immaterial consciousness since there is no concept, much less study, of the mereological details (if there are any) of a soul. But there are two considerations for immaterial selves I will simply call 'practical challenges': (i) whether or not being an immaterial self may be insufficient for knowledge and (ii) whether or not an immaterial self would exist in an existentially awkward way. In the case of (i), one wonders if there are sufficient criteria in being a purely immaterial person as to whether or not a self could obtain knowledge apart from the five senses. In (ii), one wonders if a disembodied immaterial

⁶⁷ See Chapter 1, n. 12.

soul would live a limited, boring life. Both of these points have been the partial focus of the book *Individuals* by P. F. Strawson who argues that support for (i) has implications for (ii).⁶⁸ Since angels and demons have never had, nor will have, physical bodies, these points add practical difficulties for conceiving being an angel or demon as a meaningful existence.

In *Individuals*, P. F. Strawson argues that the individual's point of view of their own, private mental states *just is* an indisputable aspect of one's subjective existence. This is necessary since the 'I' does not pick out anything other than the subjective aspect of me – a me that is, by all other lights, identified normally through physical descriptions. What Strawson has in mind is that there are, on the one hand, predicates known only to the self (i.e. 'I am depressed') and, on the other hand, predicates observable by others (i.e. 'he exhibits sombre behaviour'). Now, if I am depressed, I may exhibit sombre or gloomy behaviour. But this correlation, as far as Strawson can tell, is anecdotal to me only. In effect, I generalise my being depressed with sombre behaviour when I have no justified reason to do so other than the hasty generalisation of a singular sample: me. Therefore, I cannot ascribe states of depression to myself unless I can assign them to others. And this we can do. We can say something like 'Whitfield is depressed' where being depressed is a private psychological state and ground of the basis of the external behaviour Whitfield exhibits (viz. sombre behaviour). Whitfield's depression does not pick out a discrete ego that is depressed but it does when we include what the external behaviour of Whitfield's body shows. Similarly, it does not make sense to refer to an 'I' apart from its body as if it is sufficient to pick out a particular person on its own. What it means to be a person is to be a bearer not only of self-ascribable predicates (private access) but

⁶⁸ Peter F. Strawson, *Individuals*.

that one should also be a bearer of those predicates that are other-ascribable (public access).

He thus writes:

One can ascribe states of consciousness to oneself only if one can ascribe them to others. One can ascribe them to others only if one can identify other subjects of experience. And one cannot identify others if one can identify them *only* as subjects of experience, possessors of states of consciousness. [...] [A] necessary condition of states of consciousness being ascribed at all is that they should be ascribed to the very same things as certain corporeal characteristics, a certain physical situation &c.⁶⁹

Accordingly, I take Strawson as saying that we cannot connect our own subjective experiences to our bodies apart from an objective criterion about how to connect *any* consciousness to *this* or *that* body.⁷⁰ Mental states describable *only* by the internal, private predications of a phenomenal self will be inadequate in picking out just who the subject is in relation to some body or other. And so

there could never be any question of assigning an experience, as such, to any subject other than oneself; and therefore never any

⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 100 and 102.

⁷⁰ In the illuminating words of H. D. Lewis, 'We cannot, in other words, conceive of ourselves at all except as beings with physical characteristics'. H. D. Lewis, 'Mind and Body: Some Observations on Mr. Strawson's Views: The Presidential Address', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 63 (1962 - 1963), p. 15.

question of assigning it to oneself either, never any question of ascribing it to a subject at all. So the concept of the pure individual consciousness— the pure ego— is a concept that cannot exist; or, at least, cannot exist as a primary concept in terms of which the concept of a person can be explained or analysed.⁷¹

By now it should seem obvious that Strawson's discourse pertains to *epistemic* personhood and not really *metaphysical* personhood. He is not saying *there can be no unembodied centres of self-consciousness*. Rather, Strawson is concerned more or less with the language and epistemology of what it means to *identify* or *refer to* a person – a person that is the combination of two aspects: the possessor of mental states and a specific body (and so his is not in any way an anthropological dualism). And since experiences often refer to bodily predicates ('I feel pain in my right leg'), the body becomes crucial in acquiring such a thing as pain. Thus, if one were to be without a body, we would have the problem of being able to know certain experiences.

Since Strawson goes on to speculate as to what a disembodied person would think about,⁷² he does not consider the scenario of being an immaterial soul to be impossible. The disembodied person, he says, could be a consciousness that is lacking in such a way that 'in

⁷¹ Strawson, *Individuals*, p. 102.

⁷² One wonders if this is an inconsistency in Strawson's thinking. See Lewis's closing comments in his 'Mind and Body', pp. 21-22. I take it that it is the *ego* that can be disembodied as an individual 'from having been a person' (Strawson, *Individuals*, p. 106) since a Strawsonian person is the compositum of being an embodied ego.

order to retain his idea of himself as an individual, he must always think of himself as disembodied, as a *former* person.⁷³ The implication of this is that

there is, *from the point of view of his survival as an individual*, no difference between the continuance of experience and its cessation. Disembodied survival, on such terms as these, may well seem unattractive. No doubt it is for this reason that the orthodox have wisely insisted on the resurrection of the body.⁷⁴

I take it that Strawson thinks that if a consciousness or ego were conceived of as being separate (in this case separated) from a material body then the 'unattractive' feature is that such a consciousness would be incapable of acquiring new experiences and would merely be relegated to holding on to the memories of experiences once acquired (on the same page he says the disembodied ego 'has, as it were, no personal life of his own to lead, he must live much in the memories of the personal life he did lead').⁷⁵ Such an existence would be tiresome and bland.

We can build on this, on behalf of Strawson, a further complication as it applies here in that angels and demons *have never been embodied to have the sorts of experiences one can recall and so never were persons, and so would live utterly 'unattractive' lives*. Thus, given the problem of having a meaningful existence if Strawson is right, there is obviously something to

⁷³ Strawson, *Individuals*, p. 116.

⁷⁴ Ibid. Nicholas Everitt has more recently (and correctly, in my opinion) insisted that only physical beings possess the natural ability to have empirical sensations. See Nicholas Everitt, 'Substance Dualism and Disembodied Existence', *Faith and Philosophy*, 17 (2000), pp. 333-347.

⁷⁵ Strawson makes a similar move in his subsequent rejection of Kant's Transcendental Idealism. See his *Bounds of Sense: An Essay on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1966).

be said about the mind's dependence on a body.⁷⁶ Furthermore, the *a priori* implications for demons as immaterial persons would be detrimental: They cannot meaningfully exist *as persons* apart from a material constitution (e.g. an apparatus for sensible experience and external individuation).⁷⁷ Thus, if they are immaterial, they are living in nearly complete ignorance in a supremely boring or lonely existence where the demon is only aware of itself.

However, there are other possible experiences of a different sort that would themselves impart knowledge and meaning for the unembodied soul's existence. For example, I see no reason to think that a disembodied (or unembodied) mind might not enjoy the ongoing experiences or self-conscious states of things like love, hate, sadness, remorse, guilt, frustration, desire, belief, memory, thinking, awareness, and intentionality apart from having a corporeal nature.⁷⁸ Demons could even ponder propositional truths and react intellectually and

⁷⁶ The problem is compounded further yet by the complaint Strawson has elsewhere against our ability to distinguish between a human body having one soul as opposed to having a thousand souls, each with identical experiences. How might one individuate the soul's identity as it pertains to its singular body unless we simply acknowledge that we do so by appeal to the individuating *man* (the physical body)? See Strawson, *Bounds of Sense*, pp. 168-169. Now, Strawson does not mean that consciousness is therefore *reducible* to the body but, as poignantly noted by Joseph Margolis, neither does it *exclude* such a possibility either (cf. Joseph Margolis, 'On the Ontology of Persons,' *The New Scholasticism*, 50 (1976), p. 77).

⁷⁷ C. B. Martin observes that on Strawson's theory 'the consciousness or ego never *was* a person, for a person is that which possesses both a body and a consciousness [...] but is the consciousness or ego of a former person'. C. B. Martin, 'People', *Contemporary Philosophy in Australia*, ed. by Robert Brown and C. D. Rollins (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1969), p. 170.

⁷⁸ See Swinburne, *Evolution of the Soul*, pp. 21-141; id., *Mind, Brain, & Free Will*, pp. 74-87. Descartes expands the attributes of *thinking* in defining the unembodied ego as one that 'doubts, affirms, denies, that knows a few things, that is ignorant of many [that loves, that hates], that wills, that desires, that also imagines and perceives'. René Descartes, 'Meditation III', *Meditations on First Philosophy*, translated in *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*, 4th ed., trans. by Donald A. Cress (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1998), p. 70. My counterexamples here pertain mostly to *experiential* knowledge of an unembodied sort. Even materialists like Daniel Dennett ground personhood apart from bodily considerations (not to say that such a thing is metaphysically possible for the likes of Dennett, but only that he does so define personhood with attributes that do not themselves require an embodied agent). See Daniel Dennett, 'Conditions of Personhood', *The Identities of Persons*, ed. by A. Rorty (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1976), pp. 175-196. His six conditions are as follows: rationality, intentionality, propriety as the object of a personal stance, ability to reciprocate such a stance, verbal communication, and self-consciousness. The condition of 'verbal' communication might just be an overstatement of the ability to communicate (after all, we can imagine someone being of the type of person that communicates only through handwriting that would not make such a person any less of a person). In fact, G. R.

emotionally to each one without reliance upon any corporeal sensation.⁷⁹ Perhaps the concern is whether or not such knowledge or experience can fade away thereby making the Strawsonian person's vanishing memories leading to a bleak existence. But this would be to suppose that fading memories and dimming knowledge are not properties of *neurological* deterioration. Memories and such only fade due to *physical* limitations that are obvious missing in immaterial selves. But all of this ties in to a non-physical *mechanism* for demonological communicability with other minds and the world that I shall elaborate more on in Chapter 7.

Now, we are not simply left to consider idly what finite, created souls can know if we are not non-theists. An objector to Strawson might ostensibly appeal to God as a precedent for an incorporeal, passable (viz. one capable of emotional experiences) subject that is thoroughly immaterial but able to know and interact with minds – minds which themselves are, through their bodies, located at points in space. Similarly, if demons can fill the role as the supernatural

Gillett has argued that unembodied or disembodied souls can easily meet such criteria; see his 'Disembodied Persons', *Philosophy*, 61, (1986), pp. 377-386. Also worthy of note is something John McTaggart has pointed out, namely, that even if conscious states like these are essentially tied to the body right now, it does not follow that such states might not continue through some *other* means in one's (yet undisclosed) postmortem state since '[i]t may be just the existence of the body which makes these other ways impossible at present. If a man is shut up in a house, the transparency of the windows is an essential condition of his seeing the sky. But it would not be prudent to infer that, if he walked out of the house, he could not see the sky because there was no longer any glass through which he might see it'. John McTaggart, *Some Dogmas of Religion* (London: Edward Arnold, 1906), p. 105.

⁷⁹ For example, there is a group of seven itinerant Jewish exorcists who emulate the Apostle Paul's formula for performing successful exorcisms according to Acts 19.11ff. One of the demons – through the particular possessed man – replies, 'Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?' (v. 15). The words used for 'I know' and 'I recognize' are *ginosko* and *epistamai* respectively. These terms are not necessarily designations for *visual* recognition but are often terms reflecting *intellectual* and *epistemic* recognition (as in 'I know *about* X'). The verse is immediately followed by an act of retaliation by the demon: 'And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded' (v. 16). It is possible that the demon pondered various relevant propositions regarding himself and the itinerant exorcists (i.e. it is known that 'they are presently not capable of resisting a demonic assault', 'they will likely draw the attention of Paul who *can* thwart a demonic presence', and 'we are in a position – and state of desire – to inflict chaos'). Among other propositional considerations, the demon can act and react according to *information* and not necessarily on account of corporeal considerations iff the demon knows that he is at the requisite spatio-temporal coordinates to launch such an assault via the possessed man.

enemies of righteous persons (being deprived of materiality and sensory experience in the same way God is) and can acquire other kinds of putative experiences through such non-physical faculties, then we should consider any further *a priori* problems with Strawsonian persons to be inconsequential if not outright irrelevant. However, even classical theism still prompts the question as to whether or not we can, in any meaningful way, have such a thing as an unembodied person no matter who that might be. If one were to be committed to the idea that such a thing is *logically impossible* or *semantically incoherent*, we might enact a Moorean shift and now wonder whether all of this might just be a clever argument for atheism. Has the demonological realist who affirms a pure immaterialism merely kicked the problem upstairs? On the contrary, I think there are additional reasons to imagine how the notion of a purely immaterial spirit is coherent in that one could look to God as an ostensive precedent. Let us consider this point now.

4.4 God as an Ostensive Precedent for the Possibility of a Purely Immaterial Person

I shall now offer some positive, countervailing reasons for the pure immaterialism of demons to be a live option. On the one hand, the demonological views of someone like Thomas Hobbes might initially fall short of being viable explanatory alternatives due to the prospect that they perhaps cannot immediately account for or straightforwardly explain the usual connotations of the biblical semantics of *pneuma* and *רוח* (the respective Greek and Hebrew designations for 'spirit' used in the Bible).⁸⁰ Bear in mind that no one who believes in demons, even if she is a materialist, denies the demons' biblical appellations as *pneuma* and

⁸⁰ My discussion about the biblical uses of *pneuma* and *רוח* can be found in Chapter 5, Section 5.2, but I note them here in making a salient point about the initial probability of textual *interpretation*.

rû^ah and so while these are not *a priori* confirmations of immaterialism they seem to be *prima facie* ones. But as far as Hobbes himself was concerned, the *pneuma* passages could be interpreted as either metaphorical descriptions⁸¹ or descriptions of quasi-material aerial substances which is to say that any such real entities are ‘made of aire compacted by a power supernaturall’ and that *spirit*

in common speech, is either a subtile, fluid, and invisible Body, or a Ghost [...] a thin Substance Invisible [...] that hath the same dimensions that are in grosser Bodies.⁸²

Hobbes further complains that talk of angels, demons, and disembodied spirits in the way immaterialists do is but a pagan relic of ancient Greek philosophy being uncritically intimated in one’s careless mistranslation of scripture.⁸³ Either way, as a materialist, he will have nothing to do with the idea that intermediary beings might be purely incorporeal things. Now, one might just accuse him of a metaphysical bias forcing him into a theological salvage operation that indiscriminately preserves his prejudice. Yet, the immaterialist might receive similar criticism for she might just be uncritically importing her antecedent worldview as well in order to cash out the meanings of *pneuma* and *rû^ah* to fit her preconceived immaterialist prejudices. As far as theology is concerned, and apart from *a priori* considerations, Hobbes may just be at an interpretive standoff with his interlocutors.

⁸¹ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, III. 34. 214f.

⁸² Hobbes, *Leviathan* III. 34, 208, 211, ed. by MacPherson, *Leviathan*, pp. 429 and 434.

⁸³ Hobbes, *Leviathan* IV. 44. 333f.

Nonetheless, perhaps we understand both the materialist and the quasi-materialist very well: There just are no good *de facto* examples of immaterial beings that we could point to that would make pure immaterialism a putative option. But here the traditional theist will immediately protest. According to orthodoxy, God transcends the material universe because he precedes and has created all contingent things, like the spatio-temporal universe.⁸⁴ And if God is outside of space-time, then he is necessarily immaterial. So, one must accord the biblical descriptions of God's ontology in terms of *ru'ah* and *pneuma* (i.e. Genesis 1.2; John 4.24) with this connotation. As a result of this, many consider such terms to be decisively and unabashedly descriptive of an immaterial thing.⁸⁵ This would accommodate if not sustain the orthodox view that God transcends the universe. Consequently, one could easily resurrect Augustine's argument that God serves as an ostensive precedent for incorporeality:

[A] person who contends that the [human] soul is incorporeal
does not necessarily mean, that it is of an empty and futile

⁸⁴ One may have in mind an Anselmian conception of God who *necessarily* transcends the universe. For a recently codified taxonomy of the various Anselmian concepts of God, see Yujin Nagasawa, 'Theories of Anselmian Theism', *Faith and Philosophy*, 30 (2013), pp. 3-25. For an anti-Anselmian perspective, see Brian Leftow, *God and Necessity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). But it is unnecessary for an Anselmian conception to be true, only that God is believed by classical theists to be the creator of every contingent thing including the material universe.

⁸⁵ I.e. Steven B. Cowan and James Spiegel, *The Love of Wisdom: A Christian Introduction to Philosophy* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing, 2009), p. 156; John S. Feinberg, *No One Like Him: The Doctrine of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001), pp. 214-223; Jack Cottrell, *What the Bible Says About God the Creator* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2000), p. 223; Craig Blomberg, 'God & Deification', in *How Wide the Divide?: A Mormon & an Evangelical in Conversation*, ed. by Craig Blomberg and Stephen E. Robinson (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), p. 97; Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), pp. 186-188; Mortimer J. Adler, *How to Think About God* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1980), p. 84.

substance; for he allows that God, who is not an empty being, is at the same time incorporeal.⁸⁶

Hobbes is undoubtedly aware of this line of reasoning and so defers to inscrutability in that ‘the nature of God is incomprehensible; that is to say, we understand nothing of *what he is*, but only *that he is*.’⁸⁷ This leads him to further analyse *rû^ah* and *pneuma* when used of God to be mere metaphorical expressions of various divine (or otherworldly) characteristics.⁸⁸ But other (quasi-) materialists seem not to quell their uneasiness with these divine descriptions by appealing to the ineffability of God. Even as classical theists, such (quasi-) materialists readily declare God to be wholly immaterial and also *wholly distinct* from created things. They might respond by pointing out how God’s status as spirit also includes his being *simple* (viz. lacking any parts) and *eternal* which are not putatively intrinsic features of angels, demons, or departed saints (viz. other things said to be *rû^ah* and *pneuma*). Thus, one might infer that the divine attributes of God are somehow bound up in his being an immaterial spirit. And if that is the case, then if demons are immaterial spirits then demons would be divine.

But I protest that God’s superlative attributes are based in any way on the fact that he is ontologically *rû^ah* and *pneuma* – a move that seems to smack of an illicit conversion. While being thoroughly immaterial may be *necessary* to have such attributes, surely being immaterial is not *sufficient* for them. It is difficult to see how the properties of simplicity (assuming the medieval view that God’s existence *just is* his essence) and eternity (or *aseity*) are

⁸⁶ Augustine, *De Anima et eius Origine*, IV.18.

⁸⁷ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, III. 34. 208, ed. by MacPherson, *Leviathan*, p. 430.

⁸⁸ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, III. 34. 208-210.

metaphysically or inherently tied to God's pneumatic status rather than to some other condition such as his *divine* status. It seems to me that immateriality *simpliciter* does not entail in any way such divine properties. Instead, it seems that part of what it means to be *deity* is more likely that what constitutes the necessary and sufficient conditions for that being's simplicity and eternity regardless of such a being's *substance*. To not be eternal (or self-existent) should be considered a deficit of God's *greatness* not his immateriality. Consider how certain abstract objects – whether propositions or numbers – would not be deemed maximally great *simply because they are immaterial* for some abstract objects are incapable of such superlative greatness (one might think of Anselm's reply to Guanilo's 'lost island' retort to the ontological argument for God's existence). Alvin Plantinga, for example, similarly insists that there is no such thing as the concept of a maximally excellent island (lost or otherwise) for one could always mentally add one more Nubian maiden or dancing lady to any excellent island one might imagine.⁸⁹ Nonetheless, if 'a maximally excellent island' is indeed a token of an abstract object, regardless if only derivable from the S5 schema of alethic modality in possible-worlds semantics,⁹⁰ it would still elude *maximal* greatness for *any* theory for there are no maximal quantities of cumulative things like Nubian maidens and dancing ladies. It would, therefore, be incorrect to think that being immaterial entails being maximally great.

⁸⁹ Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), p. 90.

⁹⁰ Theodore Sider explicates the different theories in his *Logic for Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 133-182. One notable representative dissident of the S5 theory is E. J. Lemmon. Refer to his 'Symposium: Is There Only One Correct System of Modal Logic?', co-authored with G. P. Henderson, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volumes*, 33 (1959), pp. 23-56.

Now the doctrine of simplicity, as it applies to God as the paradigm example, is far from uncontroversial and has its share of critics.⁹¹ It may just be that the doctrine of divine simplicity is false (and so would unwittingly undermine this as an objection). But never mind that. The argument for the entailment of simplicity from immateriality is dubious. If it should be the case that a being that is simple must be immaterial, it should not be obvious from this that a being that is immaterial must therefore be simple. Why must a being whose essence is not *only* his existence require that any additional properties detract from the great-making status of God? Worse, the materialist's objection would entail, in the case of the Nicene-Christian concept of God, that every immaterial being – be it angel, demon, or disembodied human – is itself a trinity. If God is a trinitarian being (viz. a being with three centres of self-consciousness each endowed with distinct cognitive faculties and mental properties), then being a trinity would also be essential to being immaterial. But notice again that it seems more apparent that being a trinity is, if inferred outside of revealed theology, best attributed to *greatness* or one's *essence as deity* and not to some unqualified immateriality.⁹² Thus, not all of God's attributes are the result of his status as a spirit but are essential properties had for other, independent reasons.

⁹¹ For a classic critique of the doctrine of divine simplicity, see Christopher Hughes, *On A Complex Theory of a Simple God: An Investigation in Aquinas' Philosophical Theology* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989). The more salient point I'm pressing is that the veridical status of divine simplicity, even if true, is irrelevant to the point about simplicity being a necessary attribute of immateriality since it is not clear why a finite immaterial being could not be complex. For a recent defence of the doctrine of divine simplicity, see James E. Dolezal, *God Without Parts: Divine Simplicity and the Metaphysics of God's Absoluteness* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011).

⁹² Richard Swinburne has argued accordingly that, prior to creation, God existed wholly in isolation and for any singular mind would only be capable of self-directed love which would not be love in any meaningful or maximal sense. Love requires that it be (at least in part) other-directed. This would necessitate that more than one mind must exist. Furthermore, a better conception of love goes beyond merely that one mind direct love at another but that a perfect love would also be cooperative toward yet another mind. This entails that at least three minds must exist for God in order for a maximally robust concept of love to be realised. See his chapter on 'The Trinity' in his *The Christian God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 170ff.

Thus, God can be used as an ostensive precedent for the kinds of souls demons might be, which is to say that in every way the *a priori* case is inconclusive either *for* pure immaterialism or against it. Therefore, any justification of immateriality (or lack thereof) of angels and demons must turn on any direct, posterior data that would be used to support it. And this shall mean that there is no initial probability or not of demons being purely immaterial.

4.5 Conclusion

By way of summarizing my defence thus far, it seems uncontroversial that there just is no good *a priori* reason for the *logical* necessity of materialism where such a view might be probabilistically quantified as 1 (viz. as a necessarily true ontological description). We have also seen that the arguments favouring some kind of *metaphysically* necessary (quasi-) materialism are insufficient to prefer it over pure immaterialism (as I have defined it). Thus, I conclude that the initial probability of demons being material must surely be <1 . But this is not saying much for if pure immaterialism is equally plausible, materialism will not find its justification through any *initial* probability so understood. We have a virtual standoff. And I believe to have shown this by emphasising the coherence of being an immaterial person against dissidents and that the notion of being immaterial in describing the nature of God should be univocally understood when applied to angels and demons (barring any other reason in which we should not do so). Thus, any initial probability of which metaphysical theory to prefer shall be *at best* a toss-up since we have no reason – logically or metaphysically – to prefer one ontological schema over another. As a virtual standoff, the matter shall have to move to the arena of an *a posteriori*

investigation to be broached in the next chapter where I advance a case for thinking that demons are purely immaterial.

CHAPTER 5

THE CASE FOR THE PURE IMMATERIALITY OF DEMONS

5.1 Introduction

In the last chapter, I sought to establish a modest thesis, namely, that the pure immateriality of demons is a *coherent* idea. This does not imply or entail that such a doctrine is *true*. But it does open up pure immaterialism as a possible option for how to understand the ontology of demons. It must also be pointed out with equal force that there are no good *a priori* reasons to think that demons could *not* be expected to be either material or quasi-material in some way. As I have concluded, this means that my theory of pure immaterialism will need to be settled on the basis of some *a posteriori* grounds (grounds that go beyond mere speculative possibilities about what *could* be). This is a crucial stage since if demons are unlikely to be immaterial, despite this being a mere possibility, my theory (viz. psychodynamic immaterialism), which includes a means of soul-soul interaction, cannot get off the ground. If demons were material beings in some way, we would just suppose that they would communicate in a way not dissimilar to how human beings do it. And we would not imagine any of their intra-worldly activity would be any more mysterious than the wind's causal influence is upon pliable physical objects. It is at this point that something needs to be said in support of the foundation of my theory – something that makes it a *desideratum* since, if demons are purely immaterial, then one must account not only for their intra-personal communication but also for their intra-worldly activity. It is in this chapter that I shall begin building my grounds of support. My delimited objective here, then, is to make a case for pure

immaterialism as the most likely explanation of the demons' ontology. It will be an inductive argument, a cumulative one, since this is a matter pertaining to what constitutes the best explanation of the relevant data.

I have in mind the biblical canon as that which constitutes the relevant data since it is the teachings of the Bible that are the definitive and unimpeachable foundations for any metaphysical claims about spiritual agencies within (Protestant) Christianity. I shall first argue that the Bible is *prima facie* dualistic in terms of its cosmology. This is important since it establishes that there are two substantial realms that are ontologically different from each other – one physical and one spiritual. I shall also argue that the Bible does give us some relevant, positive evidence for the ontology of demons regarding their immateriality in that they are uniformly identified as 'spirit.' This too is important, as 'spirit' is also the same ontological designation consistently used of God and angels. And so the uniformity of 'spirit' includes all such spiritual agencies *in toto*. I shall also argue that there is a disproportionate set of manifestation stories in that angels manifest frequently but demons never do – an expected behaviour predicated on the fact that angels are deployed by God but demons are not, and so demons would not be recipients of any special divine assistance necessary to foster any physical manifestation. After these data are considered, I shall argue that pure immaterialism displays the virtues of a good explanation better than its rivals. After formulating my arguments based on the evidence, I shall conclude that demons are probably purely immaterial beings.

5.2 Evidence for the Pure Immateriality of Demons

In this section, I shall begin to argue for the probability of pure immaterialism by offering evidences – data that confirm such immaterialism – that lead us to infer that the posterior probability of pure immaterialism is increasingly higher than materialism or quasi-materialism. In building my case, I shall emphasise and discuss three main evidences that I believe constitute part of a cumulative case for thinking so:

1. *Prima facie*, the Bible seems to imply cosmic and anthropological dualism.
2. The description of the ontology of angels and demons (as *rûah* and *pneuma*) is the same as that of God.
3. There is a disproportionate set of manifestation stories in that angels manifest frequently to observers but demons never do.

I shall now discuss and support each point in turn. But since simply pointing out how such evidence, though independently confirming of my pure immaterialist hypothesis, is not the end of the argument, I shall follow it by arguing further how the evidence, when taken together, constitutes a powerful, cumulative case for the immateriality of demons. Let us begin by turning our attention to the specific evidences.

5.2.1. *Prima facie, the Bible seems to imply cosmic and anthropological dualism.*

It is important to acknowledge up front that the Bible may not be *anthropologically* dualistic just in case materialism can adequately accommodate the various descriptions of the ontology of human beings. But I find it of equal importance to press the related point that the

Bible itself seems to speak of a *cosmic* dualism, viz. a duality of worlds where one is the physical world of terrestrial creatures and the other the transcendent realm of all spiritual agencies.¹ As pointed out in the introduction, this kind of dualism is not contested by most contemporary materialist, Christian philosophers.² To see why this may be uncontested, consider how the following references on how reality seems to be partitioned consistently of at least two ontological polarities:

‘Earth’ and ‘the highest heaven’ (I Kings 8.27)

‘Above’ and ‘below’ (Jeremiah 31.37; John 8.23)

‘Visible’ and ‘invisible’ (Colossians 1.16; II Corinthians 4.18)

‘This world’ and ‘heavenly places’ (Ephesians 6.12)

Frank Matera explains that the concept of the ‘highest heaven’ in the Old Testament was understood to be the transcendent, spiritual realm of God by no less than the Apostle Paul.³ ‘Above’, as opposed to ‘below’, equally signifies the transcendent realm of God as evidenced in Jewish apocalyptic literature.⁴ And the ‘heavenly places’ of Ephesians 6.12 refers to a realm where both God and other spiritual agencies reside – including demons! Harold Hoehner explains that these ‘heavenly places’ span ‘from God’s throne down to the sphere where

¹ It is important to stress that I am not referring to the dualism of forces, viz. that there are comparable cosmic powers equally matched in the spiritual realm – one good and one evil (i.e. Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism).

² Refer to Chapter 1, Section 1.2.

³ Frank J. Matera, *II Corinthians: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), p. 280.

⁴ Cf. I Enoch 20-36; II Enoch 8-10; 67.2.

cosmic powers reside and operate'.⁵ As indicated by Ephesians 1.20 ('[God] worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places'), it is the otherworldly province of God himself. I now turn to some passages that *prima facie* imply an anthropological dualism. Consider the following selection:

'To depart [the flesh]' and 'remain in the flesh' (Philippians 1.23-24)

'Body' and 'soul' (Psalm 31.9; Matthew 10.28)

'Flesh' and 'spirit' (Isaiah 31.3; John 3.6)

'Natural' and 'spiritual' (1 Corinthians 15.44, 46)

'In the body' and 'out of the body' (2 Corinthians 12:2-3)

The list could easily continue, but in terms of an apparent contrasting of the physical world with the world of spirit, it is difficult not to see how *pneuma* (spirit) and *sōma* (body) might not also be the ontological polarities of a bifurcated reality. *If* God and angels reside in a realm utterly different from our physical one, then it seems reasonable to suppose that the inhabitants indigenous to a heavenly, spiritual realm would likely have a different ontology from those of a terrestrial, corporeal realm. Hence, we would seem to have two *kinds* of things in our ontology. And whether this alone should lead to believing in a *compositum* of substances in human beings is not a question that need be resolved here.

Regarding the biblical portrait of intermediary beings (viz. both angels and demons) as residents of this otherworldly realm, the eminent New Testament scholar James D. G. Dunn

⁵ Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), p. 169. Also see Stephen E. Fowl, *Ephesians* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), pp. 35-39, 203-205.

reminds us that demons were once considered as sources of mental and physical affliction and that they were 'all understood as experiences of personal forces from the spiritual realm' and that '[o]ther forces operating on humanity's world from the spiritual realm are thought of as good spirits or angels.'⁶ In fact, such cosmic dualism has been so apparent that the history of theology has had to weather the incessant complaint that it is uncritically and unabashedly Platonistic.⁷ While on the subject of Platonism, I should note that this has (at least partly) motivated philosophers since William of Ockham to abandon any third reality consisting of not-quite-material-and-not-quite-spiritual objects, for it would complicate matters by positing a special world of other objects. To hijack the terminology of Karl Popper, perhaps one could just refer to this as 'world 3.'⁸ Such a world would be awkwardly situated as a tertiary, quasi-material world. It seems to me that unless there are some mitigating reasons for 'world 3', the simplest explanation apart from any such speculation would be to see the world of the *pneumata* ('spirits') in the most robust and simplest way as the world of *immaterial spirits* – that state of utter otherworldly existence where the invisible, intangible God himself resides.⁹ And this leads to – barring any irreconcilable problems – the inference that we should prefer a purely immaterial status for those intermediary beings also said to share in God's abode. This is

⁶ James D. G. Dunn, *The Christ and the Spirit: Pneumatology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), p. 5.

⁷ See the critical discussion by Stephen H. Travis, 'Psychology', *Dictionary of the Later New Testament*, ed. by Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), p. 986. For a thorough critique of the idea that the New Testament writers uncritically intimated Greek thought in this way, see Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003).

⁸ Karl Popper, 'Three Worlds', 'The Tanner Lecture on Human Values' (Delivered at the University of Michigan, April 7, 1978).

⁹ For some medieval philosophers, they would argue that the Great Chain of Being requires an intermediate ontology between anthropological duality and divinity. But such a view seems untenable since one must assume in advance that God *must* only create an optimal universe where all gradations are realised. But if that is so, it seems to me that *somewhere* along the Great Chain of Being would be incorporeal beings that are thoroughly immaterial but not divine. And how do we know that *these* aren't the intermediary beings described in the Bible? For a traditional response, see Mortimer J. Adler, *The Angels and Us* (New York: MacMillan, 1982), pp. 59-63.

to emphasise that the ontologies of those beings inhabiting the same realm should be expected to be essentially uniform. Thus, in the absence of any evidence requiring anything other than a cosmic dualism, it is evident that the expected nature of demons, as creatures not of this world, should be seen as members of the world God inhabits. And if the world God inhabits is utterly otherworldly (viz. purely immaterial), then demons should be considered purely immaterial as well.

At this point I want to offer an argument in favour of anthropological dualism in the Bible since the mere appearance of dualism is not enough. I want to do this mostly because it would increase the elegance of the explanation that dualism offers but also partly because my use of human soul-soul commerce presumes such dualism and constitutes a part of my case for the uniformity of cognitive interaction.¹⁰ If the New Testament *prima facie* suggests an anthropological dualism, then I submit that we have one more reason to affirm a cosmic dualism.¹¹ And if human beings are composites of two substances, of which one is purely immaterial, then we have independent confirmation of two fundamentally different kinds of substances. Let us now turn to a brief defence of anthropological dualism.

John W. Cooper, a proponent of anthropological dualism, cautions readers of the New Testament that its usage of '[p]articlar words such as *sarx*, *sōma*, *psychē*, *pneuma*, and *kardia* have a variety of meanings which can vary from one New Testament book to another' and so if

¹⁰ See Chapter 7, Section 7.2.

¹¹ Other contemporary philosophers see anthropological dualism taught in the Bible. For example, see Stewart Goetz, 'Human Persons are Material and Immaterial (Body and Soul)', *Debating Christian Theism*, pp. 261-269; Stewart Goetz and Charles Taliaferro, *A Brief History of the Soul* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), pp. 30-32; J. P. Moreland and Gary Habermas, *Beyond Death: Exploring the Evidence for Immortality* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998).

such a case is based solely on this terminology, 'the case for dualism is pretty slim'.¹² Cooper explains that biblical writers did not write from a Platonistic standpoint and, so, merely finding words like 'body' and 'soul' in reference to human beings does not *prima facie* entail such dualism. To avoid Cooper's criticism, I shall advance my case based on passages that do not rely on 'body' and 'soul'. In each of the following select passages, there are terms being used specifically of the human body which imply the notion of *occupancy* or *inhabitation* by a subject or ego:

'Temple' (I Corinthians 3.16-17; 6.19)

'Vessel' (I Peter 3.7)

'Tent' (II Corinthians 5.1-4)

'Cloth[ing]' (II Corinthians 5.4)

And with respect to the latter two references, even Cooper himself wholeheartedly thinks that they endorse anthropological dualism.¹³ Since the *pneuma* of God and angels is described as having otherworldly attributes (being invisible, intangible, etc.¹⁴) and that the body is being compared here in terms of a corporeal exterior to the inner subject along with the previous evidence that there is at least a dualistic motif on a cosmic level, it is difficult to not see the overall insinuation of an anthropological dualism.¹⁵ And if demons should share the ontology of

¹² John W. Cooper, *Body, Soul & Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), pp. 96 and 99.

¹³ See Cooper, *ibid.*, pp. 141-149.

¹⁴ E.g. Luke 24.39; Romans 1.20; Colossians 1.15-16; I Timothy 1.17.

¹⁵ For a more extensive defence of a biblical anthropological dualism, I refer readers to the entirety of Cooper's *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*.

God and angels (beings that are purely immaterial) in a bifurcated reality so described, then it is likely that demons are uniformly immaterial along with God and angels.

Thus dualism, both cosmic and anthropological, seems to be promoted in the Bible. And if the demons' nature should be the same as the other spiritual agencies, then we have a stronger argument for their being immaterial. This leads us to the next claim under discussion, namely, that the ontological substance of demons (and angels) is indeed the same as the ontological substance of God.

5.2.2. The description of the ontology of angels and demons (as rū^āḥ and pneuma) is the same as that of God.¹⁶

The Bible contains *explicit* descriptions of the demons' (and Satan's) ontology even if such descriptions turn out to be ambiguous or variegated. In particular, I want to discuss how demons (and angels) are described with the same terminology used of God, viz. 'spirit', and that such terminology is unqualified, that is, is used univocally in each case. If such terminology designates God as purely immaterial then, *ceteris paribus*, we should think of demons the same way. However, some have suggested that there are passages in which it is implied that the demons are in fact material or quasi-material. I shall simply say up front that no such passages

¹⁶ In the analysis that follows, I have left out any discussion regarding *nephesh* and *psuchê* (the Hebrew and Greek terms, respectively, for 'soul') since these terms are very much ambiguous in just about every occurrence within the Bible. Though I find it fair to equate 'soul' with 'spirit' in English for simplicity's sake, we do not have any indisputable indication that this is the case of the Bible's various uses. 'Soul' may just refer to a person as in I Peter 3.20 which mentions the 'eight souls' who were rescued in Noah's Flood. This would mean that a passage like 'the soul who sins shall die' (Ezekiel 18.20) could be taken to refer to the entire composite unity of the embodied person or it could refer to the judgement of the psychical aspect (or neither perhaps). And some biblical verses seem to speak of 'soul' and 'spirit' as if referring to two separate things *within* the same person (cf. Job 7.11; I Thessalonians 5.23; Hebrews 4.12).

exist and that any putative references thought to imply the materiality of demons do not do so.¹⁷

Concerning the positive data (or evidence), I turn to the Old and New Testaments which use the phrases ‘evil spirit’ and ‘unclean spirit’ in describing demonic beings.¹⁸ Both the Hebrew phrase (*rā rû^aḥ*) and the Greek ones (*pneuma poneron* for ‘evil spirit’ and *akatharton pneuma* for ‘unclean spirit’) represent the English translation of ‘evil spirit’/‘unclean spirit’ which are meant to account for and describe the incorporeality and spirituality of such beings.¹⁹ *Rû^aḥ* itself, though engendering a variety of usages throughout the Hebrew Bible, consistently refers to (when applied to personal beings) the possessing of an immaterial nature. For example, it is the same noun as used in the designation ‘Spirit of God’ where it seems to connote or imply some immaterial and intangible aspect of God’s nature (Psalm 51.11).²⁰ ‘Spirit’ is also used to distinguish some inner (non-public) aspect of the human person (Zechariah 12.1). However, it is also worth mentioning that, etymologically, *rû^aḥ* can

¹⁷ See Chapter 6, Section 6.3. That demons are purely immaterial is a dominant view that is held by most conservative Christian scholars today. For example, see Peter Kreeft, *Angels and Demons: What Do We Really Know about Them?* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1995), p. 95; Moshe Sluhovskiy, *Believe Not Every Spirit: Possession, Mysticism, & Discernment in Early Modern Catholicism* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 10; C. Fred Dickason, *Angels: Elect & Evil* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1975), pp. 124 and 174; Merrill F. Unger, *Biblical Demonology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1994), p. 63; Kurt E. Koch, *Demonology Past and Present: Identifying and Overcoming Demonic Strongholds* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1973), p. 27.

¹⁸ See Judges 9.23; Luke 7.21; 8.2; Acts 19.12-16. We cannot say the same for the Old Testament’s use of ‘familiar spirit’ (*’ōwb*) since such an expression appears to refer to deceased persons and not demons even if it should turn out that familiar spirits are in fact demons.

¹⁹ Cyril of Jerusalem, for example, notes that ‘everything that does not have a solid body is generally called spirit. Since the devils do not have such bodies they are called spirit’, *Catechesis* I. XVI. 15, *The Works of Saint Cyril of Jerusalem*, II, The Fathers Of The Church Series, Vol. 64, tr. by Leo P. McCauley and Anthony A. Stephenson (Baltimore, MD: Catholic University of America Press, 1969), p. 85. For Cyril, ‘spirit’ is understood to be the contrastive expression to ‘body’ when used of personal agents. Origen used the reference to *pneuma* in describing what God is as his evidence for the incorporeality of God. See his *De Principiis* I. 1.

²⁰ For some examples of ‘spirit’ in general application to God, see Genesis 1.2; Exodus 31.3; Numbers 24.2; I Samuel 10.10; Isaiah 61.1; Ezekiel 39.29.

sometimes take on the quite ordinary connotations of ‘wind’ and ‘breath.’²¹ But it seems to me that the Hebrew term’s association with such things simply underscores the *insensible* and *imperceptible* aspects of God and does not intend to literally describe God as having atmospheric or vaporous attributes (viz. attributes that are really physical but just elusive to an outside observer’s five senses). However, it is no small point that the ‘aerial’ designation for demons does not seem to be necessarily ruled out simply on the basis of the etymology of these Hebrew nouns since *pneuma* was believed by many ancient Greeks to refer to a quasi-material ontology.²² Yet it should also be pointed out that when ‘wind’ is to be the preferred connotation, the Septuagint uses the Greek term *anemos* and not *pneuma* to translate the Hebrew *rû^{ah}*. This is because *pneuma* is the distinctive term normally associated with an immaterialist ontology.²³ Given *rû^{ah}*’s overt application to God’s nature, it is difficult to think that this term should pertain to an aerial or quasi-material ontology since God’s nature is supposed to be the instantiation of maximal being.²⁴ Thus, *pneuma* should be understood in a full Hellenistic-Jewish context and not a context that indiscriminately appeals to its bald usage in unrelated pagan (viz. Greek) sources. In other words, there is more to interpreting a term

²¹ The abutting connection of ‘breath’ with ‘spirit’ is very apparent in passages like Genesis 2.7 and Job 27.3.

²² I.e. Anaximenes, a pre-Socratic, believed that the soul was composed of air (Aetius, Fragment 2). In the post-Socratic world, Plato uses *pneuma* to refer to a vaporous substance (*Timaeus* 49c; 78A, B; 84D, E). On the ancient Greek usage of *pneuma* as ‘wind’ or ‘air,’ see Terence Paige, ‘Who Believes in “Spirit”? Πνεῦμα in Pagan Usage and Implications for the Gentile Christian Mission’, *The Harvard Theological Review*, 95 (2002), pp. 417-436. Incidentally, such a historical intertwining of ‘spirit’ and ‘wind’ has an ancestry beyond ancient Greece in most parts of the world. See David Parkin, ‘Wafting on the Wind: Smell and the Cycle of Spirit and Matter’, *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 13 (2007), pp. (S)40-42.

²³ See the classical contribution by William Ross Schoemaker, ‘The Use of “Ruah” in the Old Testament and of “Pneuma” in the New Testament’ (unpublished doctoral dissertation, The University of Chicago, 1903), p. 36. Sometimes *psyche* is used by the LXX translators in place of *rû^{ah}* if a vague general principle of inner vitality is envisaged. See Daniel Lys, ‘The Israelite Soul According to the LXX’, *Vetus Testamentum*, 16 (1966) pp. 213f.

²⁴ One may thus continue to agree with P. A. Nordell’s insistence that ‘[i]n each advance in meaning the underlying conception of the word [*ruah*] is still that of an invisible, immaterial force, cognizable through its effects. Such [...] is the Hebrew usage of the word’. P. A. Nordell, ‘The Old Testament Doctrine of the Spirit of God’, *The Old Testament Student*, 4 (1885), p. 434.

than merely its conventional usage outside of its local context. We have already seen this phenomenon with the New Testament's employment of *daimon* being distinct from the ancient (pagan) Greek conception of it.²⁵

One might then argue (as Hobbes did) that 'Spirit of God' is in fact intended to be understood metaphorically,²⁶ as are 'spirit of whoredom'²⁷ and 'spirit of divination',²⁸ where such designations refer to exhibited patterns of behaviour embodied in those who practice such things, noting that they are not designating something called 'whoredom' to be an immaterial existent. However, something like 'whoredom' and 'divination' are not themselves persons at all, they are *tendencies*. Contrast this with Haggai 1.14 which uses 'spirit of Zerubbabel', 'spirit of Joshua', and 'spirit of all the remnant of the people' where such designations are not meant to refer to behavioural dispositions but to the *inward natures of these men* (however that might be understood); thus, the passage says that 'the LORD stirred up' the core natures of these men, which is to say that their consciences and desires were aroused. Consequently, when 'spirit' is predicatively applied to 'God' (or any *person*), it always seems to emphasise the non-terrestrial and otherworldly nature of that being and does not simply promote the personification of an abstract attribute or behaviour.

The New Testament appears to offer up the same understanding of 'spirit.' In fact, its designation of demons as *pneuma(ta)* seems to be a *prima facie* indication of their having an

²⁵ See Chapter 2, Section 2.2.

²⁶ Hobbes writes: 'Spirit [is] either properly a reall substance, or Metaphorically, some extraordinary ability or affection of the Mind, or of the Body'. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* III. 34. 210, *Thomas Hobbes – Leviathan*, ed. by C. B. MacPherson (London: Penguin Books, 1985), p. 433.

²⁷ Hosea 5.4.

²⁸ Acts 16.16.

incorporeal nature (given that 'a spirit does not have flesh and bones'²⁹) and likely one that hints at a full-blown immaterialist ontology given the contrastive spirit-flesh couplets as exemplified in the following passages:³⁰

Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The *spirit* indeed is willing, but the *flesh* is weak (Matthew 26.41).

[Y]ou are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the *flesh*, so that his *spirit* may be saved in the day of the Lord (1 Corinthians 5.5).

For the desires of the *flesh* are against the *Spirit*, and the desires of the *Spirit* are against the *flesh*, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do (Galatians 5.17).

It is *prima facie* apparent that the ontic contrary of *flesh* is *spirit* and that each is a polarity fundamentally distinct from the other. When we turn to the Johannine account of Jesus's own

²⁹ Luke 24:39.

³⁰ See Schoemaker, *ibid.*, p. 66. David Paulsen, himself a quasi-materialist even of God's ontology, acknowledges that the early Christian church in their fight against those who (in some quarters) proffered the corporeality of God (after early deliberation on the subject) believed that the Bible advocated the incorporeality of God. See Paulsen, 'Early Christian Belief in a Corporeal Deity: Origen and Augustine as Reluctant Witnesses', *The Harvard Theological Review*, 83 (1990), pp. 105-116. Nathan Jacobs draws on a similar sentiment in his 'Are Created Spirits Composed of Matter and Form?: A Defense of Pneumatic Hylomorphism,' *Philosophia Christi*, 14 (2012), pp. 79-108.

incarnation, we read that, as the pre-existing *logos* of God, this personage takes on the additional nature of *flesh* for the purpose of being ‘in the world’ and to ‘dwell among us.’³¹ It is not surprising, then, that *pneuma* might be unequivocally used to describe God, angels, departed human beings, and demons. This would be an effective way to enunciate their non-physical status. The understanding of ‘spirit’ as describing something non-physical, as it pertains to demons in particular, becomes all the more evident in Paul’s contrast of the authorities of the physical world with the ‘spiritual [*pneumatika*] forces of evil in the heavenly places’ (Ephesians 6.12c). Paul’s use of ‘in the heavenly places’ (*tois epouraniois*) seems to indicate the celestial province of these spirits that exist apart from the terrestrial – something to be expected if *pneuma* is indeed a reference to something immaterial.³² And such a pneumatology may have interesting implications for systematic theologians who want to find solidarity between these conclusions and the conclusions about reality offered up in non-biblical disciplines like astrophysics.³³

³¹ John 1.10, 14.

³² Paul uses *tois epouraniois* in describing the otherworldly ‘location’ of the post-resurrected Christ in Ephesians 1.20. I suppose one could appeal to Paul’s correspondence in Ephesians 2.2 (that Satan is the ‘prince of the power of the air’) for some internal, direct biblical support of the aerial nature of demons that does not merely rely on the etymology of *pneuma* (this point is advanced by Augustine in his *De Agone Christiano* III). However, it seems to me that such an appeal is dubious simply because it puts a lot of stock in the use of the genitive preposition ‘of the power of the air’ (*tes exousias tou aeros*). At best this preposition suggests merely the *jurisdiction and extent of authority* and does not in and of itself invoke any metaphysical commitment based on that jurisdiction. To see this, consider parallel prepositions connoting some form of provincial authority, as in Psalm 104.21’s use of ‘ruler over all his possessions’ (*archonta pases tes kteseos autou*, LXX) and Daniel 11.22’s use of ‘prince of the covenant’ (*egoumenos diathekes*, LXX). Surely neither the ‘ruler’ nor the ‘prince’ in these passages is meant to be metaphysically composed of ‘possessions’ or ‘covenants.’

³³ If one is doing systematic theology (and so including other disciplines outside of immediate biblical hermeneutics), one may consider that the standard Big Bang theory within contemporary cosmology envisages *all matter and energy* as having emerged from the universe’s birth some 13.8 billion years ago. Or, it could be that matter and energy emerged from the birth of a multiverse if one indeed precedes our present universe. And, in such a case, there are good reasons to think that the multiverse itself would be the *terminus* of all matter, energy, and space such that no physical particles would precede or reside outside of its boundaries anyway. On either theory, God precedes materiality and so this is the sort of ontology of spiritual beings we would expect to find if God and other spiritual agencies should precede the universe. See the discussion by William Lane Craig and James

We have seen the positive data pertaining to the biblical terms *rû^ah* and *pneuma* and how the data appear to support a pure immaterialist framework,³⁴ namely, that throughout the canon the self-same term ‘spirit’ (*rû^ah*; *pneuma*) is consistently applied to God, angel, and demon alike. This is not to say that *rû^ah* or *pneuma* might not have multifaceted meanings, but only that there are no positive reasons for such a supposition. This is analogous to a point made by materialists who think that, as far as anthropological dualism is concerned, positing a soul as the seat of consciousness is ontologically unnecessary in order to explain the subjective ego. But if every cognitive scientist or philosopher of mind thought for a moment that materialism was able to accommodate the nature of consciousness, I think that dualists would perhaps admit philosophical defeat with respect to this phenomenon and either defer their belief in dualism to independent considerations or abandon it altogether. Indeed they *should* if materialism can adequately accommodate the landscape of ontic anthropology regarding human self-consciousness provided that there are no independent reasons to disavow materialism.

In the case of demonic ontology, I have shown how my theory of pure immaterialism not only accommodates the canon but, in some cases, is actually more compatible with it

D. Sinclair in their ‘The Kalam Cosmological Argument,’ *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, ed. by William Lane Craig and J. P. Moreland (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), pp. 136ff

³⁴ I have deliberately left out of my survey references to *disembodied* persons, namely deceased saints, due to concerns similarly echoed by Kevin Corcoran (see Chapters 5 and 6 of his *Rethinking Human Nature: A Christian Materialist Alternative to the Soul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006)). Corcoran believes that the only reason one comes to believe that the deceased saints are purely immaterial is due to an unconscious imposition of Platonism on one’s exegesis of such passages (pp. 23ff). Any time a deceased saint communicates with persons in the spatio-physical world, they are inevitably described in anti-Cartesian terms, viz. they can, *inter alia*, be seen and heard. But as I have previously noted about the angels, this phenomena is not surprising given that it is God who supernaturally makes this possible per occasion for the benefit of physical observers (cf. Numbers 22.31; II Kings 6.17). But since offering this alternative to those anti-Cartesian descriptions is merely to blunt a materialist interpretation, neither does it suggest that those deceased saints are best seen via an immaterialist interpretation. Such data, you might say, is just too ambiguous for consideration.

(being used consistently of God and demons without the ambiguity of a quasi-materialism). This point should not be understated. If the Bible described a villain, say Pontius Pilate, as ‘human’ (*anthropos*) knowing that the non-Roman Israelites were also ‘human’ (and likewise designated *anthropos*), we obviously would not imagine that the *anthropos* of Pilate was ontologically different from the *anthropos* of the Israelites – particularly since they live in the same world. That the villainous demons are ‘spirit’ should not be understood any differently from the angels and God being ‘spirit’ if we are going to be consistent in our exegesis. Merrill Unger thus speaks very strongly against the many attempts by Judeo-Christian philosophers at making the demons ontological ‘half-spirits’: ‘Scriptural truth [...] at once disposes of the notion of “half-spirits,” and with it the greater part of rabbinic and ethnic demonology, where the essential characteristic of spirit is violated.’³⁵

An implication that arises in the final assessment here is that if demons are indeed purely immaterial spirits, and are not aided by God in their activities, then demons should not be expected to physically manifest in the world. This is to say that demons would not genuinely have any physical properties allowing them to be manifested in the world. If one accepts that demons are sometimes perceived by human observers, one must imagine such perceptions to be something like a vision (something comparable to a vision of God or Christ). Concerning yet another important datum in my cumulative argument, let us now turn our attention to this very phenomenon: the frequency of extramental, physical manifestations by demons.

³⁵ Unger, *Biblical Demonology*, p. 65.

5.2.3. There is a disproportionate set of manifestation stories in that angels manifest frequently to observers but demons never do.

As I shall point out in Chapter 8, Section 8.2, God is evidently behind the deployment and empowering of his angelic emissaries in their commerce with human beings. As such, it is of no surprise that they should be resourced by God in his equipping them with temporary visibility or corporeality. This is, after all, the fundamental prerogative of God as creator. Consequently, we should not be surprised if there are (numerous) occurrences of manifestations of angels. As it turns out, the Bible is filled with examples of angelic manifestations that occur outside of the context of a visionary encounter. Here is but a partial list exemplifying this phenomenon:

Two angels appear to Abraham and they rest and dine with him
(Genesis 19.1-3).

An angel blocks Balaam from passage (Numbers 22.22-35).

An angel speaks to the nation of Israel (Judges 2.4).

An angel sits down and appears to men (Judges 6.11-12).

An angel touches the tip of the staff (Judges 6.21).

An angel appears and ministers to Manoah and his wife (Judges
13.2-21).

An angel is located by a threshing floor (2 Samuel 24.16).

An angel touches a man (I Kings 19.7).

An angel is seen by Ornan (I Chronicles 21.20).

An angel is seen dawning a sword (I Chronicles 21.30).

An angel is seen by myrtle trees (Zechariah 1.11).

An angel appeared, moved a large stone, and spoke to women visiting the tomb of Jesus (Matthew 28.2-5).

An angel appears on the right side of an altar (Luke 1.11-12).

An angel appears to Jesus (Luke 22.43).

An angel opens prison doors and speaks (Acts 5.19-20).

Angelic faces apparently can have physical characteristics (Acts 6.15).

An angel appears in a house (Acts 11.13).

Angels can apparently blend in with ordinary human beings in everyday life (Hebrews 13.2).

The list could perhaps continue, but I have highlighted some of the clearest references to angelic manifestations that cannot be explained away as mere visions or cases of mistaken identity (just in case the episodes described therein are not to be interpreted in a non-literal sense). The only substantial exception would perhaps be whether the designation ‘angel of the Lord’ refers to *God himself* manifesting (viz. a *theophany*) or an angelic ambassador of sorts (viz. an *angelophany*).³⁶ Even if this is the case, there are many remaining passages above that do not hinge on the ‘angel of the Lord’ being a reference to theophany. But now contrast this list

³⁶ The former view (theophany) is the position, for example, of the Old Testament scholar Mark Rooker. See his ‘Theophany’, particularly subsection 9, in *Dictionary of the Old Testament Pentateuch*, ed. by T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), pp. 863-864.

with how many *demonic* apparitions or physical manifestations are said to occur. As it turns out, *there are no such passages at all* (at least there are no *uncontested* passages). Some passages thought to evince demonic apparitions (of which there are only four distinct ones) will be addressed in detail in the forthcoming Chapter 6 and systematically dismissed. As theologian B. J. Oropeza summarises, ‘there is no biblical reference to demons’ manifesting themselves physically.’³⁷ This radical disparity is significant since angels and demons are said to have the same ontology with only their moral status separating them. If angels and demons share a material or quasi-material nature, then why do they not visibly or tangibly manifest outside of possession cases (i.e. cases where they do not independently manifest but utilise the minds of other sentient beings)? If I am right, and both angels and demons are purely immaterial, then God would have to creatively aid the good angels in their visible or corporeal manifestations since they would presumably (without some ancillary power) be unable to do so on their own. I presume that this is already what we think when it comes to *human* souls said to visibly appear to others in the Bible, viz. that God is the one who has made it possible if it in fact happens in an extramental way. By contrast, demons, being unaided by God’s power, would be ill-equipped to appear or manifest physically in any way. This would lead to an expected absence of any references in the Bible to demonic manifestations or apparitions of this sort. As it turns out, this is what we find. When we consider all of the ramifications of pure immaterialism, what we have in the canon (the Bible) is exactly what one would expect.

³⁷ B. J. Oropeza, *99 Answers to Questions about Angels, Demons & Spiritual Warfare* (IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), p. 74.

Altogether, we have three intriguing pieces of evidence that, when taken individually, constitute independent reasons for suspecting that demons are purely immaterial. But it also appears to be the case that when the claims are taken together, we seem to have an elegant narrative of mutual support for the overall hypothesis that demons are purely immaterial. In the next section, I want to consider how the conjoining of these three lines of evidence together serves to strengthen the case for the pure immaterialism of the demons. In so doing, I shall be incorporating some of the salient virtues of what makes a good explanation and showing how pure immaterialism best explains the aforementioned evidence. And, in rounding out the chapter, I shall formulate the overall inductive argument for that pure immaterialism.

5.3 Assessment of the Evidence

Having discussed what I find to be relevant, individual pieces of evidence for thinking that demons are immaterial, I now want to argue that these evidences constitute an inference to pure immaterialism as the best explanation of the demons' ontology. I shall do this by first showing how pure immaterialism is more parsimonious than materialism or quasi-materialism. Secondly, I shall show how pure immaterialism enjoys consilience with theological and philosophical expectations. These factors, in concert with the evidence, provide, I submit, a cumulative case for demonic pure immateriality. Let us first take a look at the contribution of parsimony.

5.3.1 Pure immaterialism is more parsimonious than (quasi-) materialism.

I have argued that we should, based on the Bible, believe that there are two different kinds of substances: material and immaterial. This leads us to consider simplifying and disambiguating our interpretive framework in the usages of *ruah* and *pneuma*. This point should not be overlooked since it reduces ambiguity over what these terms refer to when used to describe ontology. It also simplifies, by being conducive to, the number of realms that exist (only two as opposed to three). If we return to the ontology of the demon *qua* a deviant angel, we might now ask the question: How would demons be able to cause the sort of mischief attributed to them? The (quasi-) materialist can assert that their ontology permits them the necessary means for any material interactions. But that explanation only goes so far. If demons possess physical bodies (and, hence, have physical boundaries), it remains a mystery how demons otherwise might tempt the souls (or minds) of human beings that are beings of a rather different nature. They could not, without assuming a special power, interact with our spirits unless our spirits, too, are (quasi-) material.

Some suggestions from the medieval period (i.e. Augustine) are on offer and include the notion of a biophysical ‘stirring up’ of the inner fluids of the human body.³⁸ Since our spirits are paired with our bodies, any interaction we have with our own bodies is already available. This scenario nicely explains how demons can tempt people into sin. However, it must give up something. For example, I wonder how a demon, construed as material or quasi-material, can incite his victim to false doctrine (I Timothy 4.1). Or, how can they co-inhabit a human being in great numbers (Mark 5.8-9)? Would not the demon be physically trapped in its particular invaded space? Supposing I might inhale a demon into my lungs (as thought possible by some

³⁸ Augustine, *De Divinatione Daemonum* IX.

Church Fathers) or that it managed to find its way into my stomach, would not my system absorb or break down the invading material substance? Would we not feel the inner stirrings of our fluids as we do when we consume caffeine (particularly if such demonic stirring actually *changes* something in us)? Consider the realm of God. How can a quasi-material demon reside or commerce in a province that is the very abode of God who himself is purely immaterial (Job 1.6). It does not take much to see that one must posit a more complex system of demonic activity that adds additional powers or unknown complexities such as the power to resist digestion or the power to not be absorbed. Pure immaterialism has an advantage here in that it need not offer anything beyond what is already clearly noted in the Bible, namely, that demons have the same kind of spiritual nature as God and angels, and, so, they can mentally communicate with other minds. Hence, they can accomplish their temptations and interactions in that way. Invading immaterial spirits would not face digestion or absorption, and they would not physically occupy the same points in space-time in great numbers. In considering all of these factors, being immaterial can accommodate the fullest range of data about the demons and their putative activities. Of course I have yet to consider the possibility that the Bible teaches that demons interact with the physical world.³⁹ Aside from that, I conclude that pure immaterialism is the simpler hypothesis, and that it suffers from none of the aforementioned problems about how demons are able to interact with the minds of human beings. Let us now turn to another explanatory virtue in seeing how pure immaterialism emerges better across multiple disciplines, viz. philosophy and theology.

³⁹ I will do so in Chapter 9.

5.3.2 Pure immaterialism enjoys consilience with philosophical and theological expectations.

Philosophers of mind consistently work from the presupposition that under anthropological dualism, spirits are not in space and as such it is not clear how they would be capable of interacting with other souls much less with physical bodies. This has led many to reject dualism, and often this is because of the apparent lack of a sufficient explanation as to how such soul-body pairing/causality can obtain.⁴⁰ As the Bible makes apparent, demons, when they tempt or communicate with human beings, never have location *apart from the accident of being located here or there in virtue of the host's location*. No biblical passage suggests that demons are located in this province or that one. While the Bible does speak of demons (or Satan himself) being *affiliated* with certain locales (as being the 'prince of Persia'⁴¹ or 'Babylon [... being] a dwelling place for demons'⁴²), these are just conventional expressions similar to one's referring to 'the Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia' and to metaphorical expressions of geography like 'the Devil's playground.' The former expression represents agential *control* and *sovereignty* over such a province, not that the agent is necessarily *located* there.⁴³ In the latter expression, that Babylon would be the 'dwelling place for the demons', it is perhaps meant to designate Babylon as being in such solidarity with demonic principles that

⁴⁰ Even Thomistic dualists note that it is the material corpus that affords spatiality to an individually subsisting soul (something not peculiar to Cartesians). J. P. Moreland and Scott Rae, themselves Thomists, say: 'The soul occupies the body, but it is not spatially located within it. [...] When we say that the soul occupies the body we mean at least that (1) it has *direct, immediate* conscious awareness throughout the body, though not necessarily of each and every part of the body, and (2) it can *directly* and *immediately* will to move the various parts of the body. [...] While it is true that you 'occupy' your body, you (your soul) are not a spatially extended thing that is located within the geometrical boundaries of your body'. J. P. Moreland and S. B. Rae, *Body & Soul: Human Nature & the Crisis in Ethics* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), pp. 202-203.

⁴¹ Daniel 10.13.

⁴² Revelation 18.2.

⁴³ There is a similar point I made earlier in the misuse of the Pauline reference 'the prince of the power of the air' in Ephesians 2.2 as evidence for the demons' aerial ontology. See n. 28.

it is as if ran by demons directly (or indirectly as a people who are under the dominant influence of demonic (cognitive) communication).⁴⁴

Needless to say, human beings as embodied minds have location. And the demons' location is only known insofar as they manifest through their cognitive interaction with those humans. As such, the expectations of philosophical metaphysics and theological demonology accord quite well together in that both revealed theology and philosophical notions of pure immateriality (i.e. whether the *res cogitans* of Cartesianism or the subsisting form of Thomism) never locate the spirits in any place apart from a bodily union. But if no physical properties emerge for demons, and so no materialist interpretation is required by the Bible, then so much for the need for materialism. And that just means that, on the basis of the Bible, we are bound to expect Satan and the demons to possess the properties of being non-spatial and unable to interact with physical objects, *inter alia*, and these are the very expectations pure immaterialism preserves.

Therefore, it would appear that what philosophy makes clear – that immaterial spirits would not be located in any place – is implied by (or accords with) the biblical testimony about the abode of the demons. Demons are never located in this or that location, something we would expect to see in harmony with theology if we thought that both circles of study aimed at representing reality. If we consolidate all of our findings so far – that is, if we accept all of the distinct points I argued for about pure immaterialism here and above – then we should have a

⁴⁴ Parallels of this expression can be seen elsewhere where, literally, authors are not addressing the location of Satan or the demons. I.e., Smyrna is called the 'synagogue of Satan' (Revelation 2.9) and Pergamum is 'where Satan dwells' (v. 13). Obviously Satan, who is not omnipresent, cannot be located in both in Smyrna and Pergamum!

powerful, cumulative argument for the pure immateriality of demons. This is the focus of the next section.

5.3.3 *The Best Explanation of the Evidence is that Demons are Purely Immaterial Beings*

Given that one has no *a priori* reason to favour the hypothesis that demons are purely immaterial over its rivals (as established in the last chapter), I have advanced a series of arguments based on *a posteriori* considerations. Once we combine the posterior evidence with the previously established possibility of pure immaterialism, we can see that the overall probability of pure immaterialism is increased. This is to say that the specific evidence of the canon is made more reasonable (and more expected) than rival hypotheses simply given the hypothesis of pure immaterialism. But we cannot reasonably say the same thing for (quasi-) materialist views of demons since the evidence is less probable (or less expected) if (quasi-) materialism is true of those beings. In contrast to my theory, the specific evidence is actually less expected and so *lowers* the probability of any (quasi-) materialism than it would without such evidence.

The inclusion of the posterior evidence shows two things on behalf of my model: (i) the probability of my model's hypothesis of pure immaterialism is a coherent and viable option in a Judeo-Christian framework as an apt description of the ontology of demons; and (ii) the specific data of the canon increases the likelihood of pure immaterialism being the preferred explanation for that ontology. In arguing for (ii) in this chapter, we see that not only are the individual considerations confirmatory (to some degree) of pure immaterialism but that, when taken together, constitute a cumulative case for pure immaterialism. It is a simpler hypothesis

and it harmonises philosophy and theology better than its rivals. As long as the evidence is not incomplete then, in simple terms, my theory of pure immaterialism is the better justified explanation based on a combination of the philosophical background information and the specific evidence of the canonical data.

5.4 Conclusion

I have thus far sought to survey the data consisting of only the canonical material that would potentially have any positive bearing on my metaphysical schema in explaining the ontology of demons, namely pure immaterialism. I started off by explaining how the Bible's use of 'spirit' (viz. *ruah* and *pneuma*) in application to demons is *prima facie* better understood as a term referring to a purely immaterial nature. I then argued that once we take this canonical data and apply it to some of the principles that make a good explanation, pure immaterialism comes out ahead of its rivals. It seems to me that, apart from any counter-considerations, the weight of the canonical information is on the side of demonological immaterialism.

In the next chapter, I shall address objections that would appear to threaten my theory of pure immaterialism. Some of these objections are philosophical in character, and some are theological.

CHAPTER 6

OBJECTIONS TO THE PURE IMMATERIALITY OF DEMONS

6.1 Introduction

In the last chapter, I offered three independent pieces of evidence that, when considered together, constitute a strong cumulative case for the pure immateriality of demons as the best explanation of their ontology. This fulfils one of the two essential components of my overall theory (viz. psychodynamic immaterialism). However, since the history of Christian philosophy is replete with aversions to a *pure* immaterialism, the case I have presented may not have moved those otherwise deeply committed to a material or quasi-material alternative. Since some concerns and challenges have naturally been responded to in the course of the defence of my thesis, we turn to the remaining objections that stand unaddressed. In this chapter, I shall explore and respond to two categories of objections that are or can be levelled against the pure immateriality of the demons. The first category of objections shall consist of principled philosophical considerations that may lead one to retain a materialist understanding of demons despite my explanatory arguments to the contrary. The second category of objections shall consist of theological considerations – these being the most cited considerations – in preferring something contrary to immaterialism. In this category I shall explore individual passages from the Bible that appear to imply a materialist or quasi-materialist ontology. I have no doubt that such passages, combined with the pre-Christian Greek conception of the *daimon*, fuelled Patristic and medieval quasi-materialism.

I shall systematically respond to both categories of objections in an effort to minimise evidence exists against my position. As such, the case laid out in the previous chapter can be

supplemented by the conclusions drawn in this chapter in strengthening my case. If I can respond to a sufficient number of counter-evidences, we should consider the conclusion that demons are purely immaterial beings to be firmly established.

6.2 Philosophical Objections to the Immateriality of Demons

I shall now explore potential counter-arguments of a philosophical nature to the case I have provided thus far. These counter-arguments consist of both principled and factual disputes to claim that demons are purely immaterial. Such disputes are either related to arguments offered on behalf of pure immaterialism or are about implications that could be teased out of my conclusion thus making pure immaterialism available only at a significant cost. I consider the objections raised below to be the most paramount but also widely representative of the kinds of philosophical objections that may be raised. But since my argument is a preliminary strike against materialist and quasi-materialist views of demonology, these objections do not belong to any known interlocutor and so are merely anticipatory. Let us look to each in turn.

Objection #1: That a spirit would be invisible and incorporeal in no way mitigates against a spirit's being composed of an aerial substance as evident in the ancient Greek view of the daimon.

In this objection, we are to imagine the possibility of an object's being composed of a set of particulate matter arranged in such a way (or placed in such a state) that outside observers would not see the object with the naked eye. If this is metaphysically possible, as

indeed it is considering that there are such ‘insensible’ things as helium, oxygen, nitrogen, and water vapour, there is nothing about the Bible’s description of spirits as ‘invisible’ and ‘incorporeal’ that in any way diminishes the hypothesis that demons are composed of a fine, insensible material like air. This ontology would certainly be consistent, more or less, with one’s being incorporeal (viz. without any ‘gross matter’) and invisible (unable to be seen by the naked eye). It also would enjoy terminological harmony with ancient Greek conceptions of ‘spirit’ for they had conceived of spirits as quasi-material.¹ Such a description of demons implies that they are compositions of particulate bits of matter that could be made invisible to perceivers when arranged ‘demonwise’.² Of course this is possible just as visible particles like sand, when chemically arranged ‘glasswise’, can be made invisible to perceivers. However, even though such a scenario may be *consistent* with the biblical descriptions of invisibility and incorporeality, why think it is the *better* explanation?

One problem with this is that we would have a mereology of demonic composition which would multiply the existence of concrete objects (perhaps numbering in the trillions or some such grand number) far beyond what is necessary in order to account for the demons’ invisibility and incorporeality. If we are opting for a metaphysics that is quantitatively simpler, this would be headed in the wrong direction. Worse, if we must entertain the idea that to be a spirit means to be composed of some sort of individual spirit particles, we must be prepared to suppose that God is composed of these discrete particles, too. This would undoubtedly upset orthodoxy’s insistence that God has no parts. Rather, one should think that the demon would

¹ See Chapter 2, Section 2.2.

² I am borrowing from Peter van Inwagen’s familiar way of speaking of things composed of material simples. See Peter van Inwagen, *Material Beings* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 109f.

be an utterly immaterial object devoid of composition since one should rightly resist such a composition for God – a being also described as ‘spirit.’ The closer we envisage a consistent, simpler ontology consonant with being invisible and incorporeal, the less we are entitled to the more complicated and heterodox ontological structures that would implicitly compromise the ontology of God.

Now, if we ignore these difficulties for one willing to accept a mereological composition for God, one might further complain that the history of the universe has far more *frequent* occurrences of finer material objects that are invisible and incorporeal than objects that are as abstract as a purely immaterial spirit bearing those properties. For example, there are many different kinds of things we know about that are invisible and yet composed of material simples (like helium, air, water vapour, methane, carbon monoxide, Higgs field, black holes, dark matter, etc.). Contrast this to how few kinds there are of invisible things affirmed in mainstream Christianity that are not composed of material simples: God, angels, and *maybe* human souls. Given such (frequency) probabilistic expectations about what would likely be an imperceptible ontology of demons, we should reasonably conclude that such an ontology would be of a finer material so described. However, if we accept a frequency probability here, aerial natures are not the sorts of things that are most frequent, even less so when we imagine *persons* that are supposed to be aerial. In the history of the universe, we should be quite sure that *no* persons are incorporeal and invisible if we do not assume in advance that spirits or ghosts already are. But just what are these things anyway? We cannot assert up-front that they are aerial for that would obviously be begging the question. Hence, we cannot defer to a frequency probability here for the simple reason that we lack any such precedent. The

properties of incorporeality and invisibility are being assigned to persons, and that has no non-question-begging antecedents. It is more reasonable to abandon a frequency probability view and opt for an explanatory probability based on the available evidence. And that evidence, when taken in its totality, implies pure immaterialism.

Perhaps the most egregious problem with this objection is its core assumption that terms like ‘invisible’ and ‘incorporeal’ are merely *perspectival*. For example, the Bible speaks of God as being ‘invisible’ in a variety of New Testament passages (Romans 1.20; Colossians 1.15-16; I Timothy 1.17; Hebrews 11.27). The term ‘invisible’ (*aoratō*) is sometimes translated as ‘unseen’ which could imply, not an ontological invisibility, but merely being in a relation to an observer such that one is not, *from the observer’s perspective*, visible.³ However, at least in I Timothy 1.17, this is not likely the right interpretation here. This passage reads in full: ‘Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever.’ Being eternal and being immortal are both ascribed to God in the same thought; and such ascriptions appear to be utilised apart from the perspective of any would-be observers.⁴ It would seem that just as the property of being eternal is not dependent upon an observational perspective, neither should invisibility, *ceteris paribus*, be understood this way. And if so, the simplest understanding of ‘spirit’ is to imagine it as an indivisible substance being *intrinsically* incorporeal and invisible.

³ Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), p. 60.

⁴ Note how ‘immortal’ (*aoratō*) is a negative term and is translated as ‘undecaying’ which could also be construed as being merely observer-dependent (e.g. an epistemic observation that something appears to be lacking decay over time). But this is not the preferred understanding. Clearly the property of not being mortal is an intrinsic and inherent property of God despite observational affirmation. Given the conjunction of similar descriptors, we should be confident that God has the property of being *aoratō* in the sense that it is his ontology that is intrinsically invisible.

Therefore, the objection to the pure immaterialism of demons on the grounds that the biblical data employ 'invisible' and 'incorporeal' as mere perspectival designations fails to take seriously the threat of diminishing God's spiritual nature, the self-defeating implications if taken on grounds based on a frequency probability view, and a poor exegetical analysis of I Timothy 1.17. Instead, the simplest explanation – one free of these problems – is that beings described as invisible and incorporeal should be understood to be purely immaterial in being and not merely in perspective.

Objection #2: Some personal testimonies, including testimonies to demonic materiality or quasi-materiality, ought to be considered as part of the data in determining the best explanation of the demons' ontology.

Unlike the previous objection, this one has partial precedent in that some Christian philosophers and theologians have suggested (or implied) that personal testimony has evidential weight when it comes to demonology.⁵ What the objector would be doing here is to include some, and not all, testimonies of people who have had first-hand experiences with demons as perceptible objects. And something that is a perceptible object would not be a purely immaterial spirit. Moreover, the objector will insist, one cannot dismiss personal testimony wholesale on grounds that it is inherently unreliable, for this would be to dismiss *all* testimonies *on all matters* of the same sort. This would mean that eyewitnesses could never give evidence in a court of law or that one's having been in pain could be mistaken when

⁵ For example, see Derek Prince, *They Shall Expel Demons: What You Need to Know about Demons--Your Invisible Enemies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 1998), Part 2; C. Fred Dickason, *Angels: Elect & Evil* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1975), p. 176; Kurt Koch, *Demonology Past and Present* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1973), pp. 53-74.

recalled. But these seem like incredible consequences if we dismiss testimony altogether. Surely at least *some* testimony is reliable. And, if so, this would include many personal testimonies related to demonic materiality.

Testimony *can* indeed be a reliable means of acquiring knowledge. But, insofar as it is applied to demonic encounters, I submit that not all such experiential encounters should automatically be considered as evidence because many experiences are overlaid with an interpretive framework that introduces elements not evident in the encounter itself.⁶ For example, someone may observe near a production studio in Hollywood, California what appears to them as a green tree. But someone else, receiving the same experiential data, may think that they are experiencing a movie prop that only looks like a green tree. To call such an experience evidence of there being a green tree would be to impose an interpretation of that experience which would be justifiable if and only if the movie prop hypothesis was not a better interpretation of the same experience. This is not to say that neither one is correct, but rather that one is not justified in drawing a particular metaphysical conclusion when an alternative

⁶ It may be that *all* testimony is prone to interpretive ambiguity, but such an ambitious claim need not be true for testimonial evidence to be set aside here. The contemporary period ensconces a similar trend amongst philosophers of science in discussing explanatory reasoning based on testimony. Many philosophers have suggested that the prospect of a theory-independent form of observation or fact-gathering is in principle *virtually impossible*. See Thomas Kuhn, *The Structures of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1970), pp. 16-17. Kuhn outright calls the distinction between 'discovery and invention or fact and theory' to be 'exceedingly artificial' because they are always 'intertwined' in some way (pp. 52-53). Also see Nancy Cartwright, 'How We Relate Theory to Observation', *World Changes: Thomas Kuhn and the Nature of Science*, ed. by Paul Horwich (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994), pp. 259-274; Ralph Baergen, 'The Influence of Cognition Upon Perception: The Empirical Story', *Australian Journal of Philosophy*, 71 (1993), pp. 13-23; David Papineau, *Theory and Meaning* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979). However, I would not say that because testimony is prone to interpretive ambiguity that it, therefore, is utterly unreliable. Instead, one should follow something like the criteria of testimonial reliability laid out by Robert Audi: 'First, we might say that at least normally, a belief based on testimony is thereby justified (that is, justified based on testimony) provided the believer has overall justification for taking the attester to be credible regarding the proposition in question. Second, we might say that at least normally, a belief based on testimony thereby constitutes knowledge provided that the attester knows the proposition in question and the believer has no reason to doubt either the proposition or the attester's credibility regarding it'. *Epistemology*, (New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 138; cf. Richard Swinburne, *Epistemic Justification* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 123-128.

hypothesis that is just as likely to be true in the given circumstances might also accommodate the same data. That one is being appeared to green-treely is not in dispute. But whether it is an actual tree or a manufactured fake is not settled in the experience itself.⁷ And so it would be with any putative demonic perception.

This much may be granted by most. What concerns the hypothetical objector here is that the few reliable eyewitnesses (or *ear*witnesses) of demonic encounters *do* testify to a material or quasi-material ontology of demons in the absence of a better explanation of the specific experiential data in question. The percipient may get the precise interpretation wrong, but surely they cannot be wrong about the physical attributes they are beholding. Often, paranormal things like apparitions and voices are experienced in *this* or *that* location. These cannot be dismissed as being merely part of an interpretive framework any more than my experiencing pain *in my right leg* can. An outsider could dismiss such testimonies as lies, but then one would be using pure immaterialism as the test for what constitutes a lie or not – a criterion that obviously begs the question. So the problem of how to handle the testimony of a delimited few whose credible testimonies are, by all lights, based on legitimate experiences of the relevant sort does not go away by merely forbidding such potential evidences from being part of the *explananda*. To do so would be to beg the question as to what constitutes admissible evidence.

⁷ The famous philosopher of science at MIT, Thomas Kuhn, in commenting on how fact-gathering in science has occurred throughout history, rightly notes that '[n]o natural history can be interpreted in the absence of at least some implicit body of intertwined theoretical and methodological belief that permits selection, evaluation, and criticism. [...] No wonder, then, that in the early stages of the development of any science different men confronting the same range of phenomena, but not usually all the same particular phenomena, describe and interpret them in different ways'. Thomas Kuhn, *The Structures of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1970), pp. 16-17.

Perhaps one could respond by insisting that each experience should be taken on a case-by-case basis and evaluated accordingly. In so doing, one may discover that each testimony is refutable. But that is too quick. We cannot simply say in advance that no putative testimony will ever challenge the pure immaterialist hypothesis. How could we possibly know that? But rather than insisting on a hypothetical notion that any testimony in the future may be discredited, there is actually a way to embrace every putative experience of a demon – of both sight and sound – without thinking the pure immaterialist thesis to be incorrect. The consequence would be, not to dismiss individual testimonies, but to neutralise their effectiveness in constituting evidence against pure immaterialism. If it turns out that *at least one* testimony is sufficiently credible, then, one might argue, this would imply the falsity of pure immaterialism. But if there exists a possible counterexample such that one can adequately reconcile credible testimony with pure immaterialism, then the objection based on testimony would fail to refute pure immaterialism.⁸

In his *De Civitate Dei*, Augustine seeks to appease his pagan readers by tacitly accepting the eyewitness testimonies of those who believe in the supernatural power of *transmutation*.⁹ He probably conceded so that the audience of his evangelistic efforts, those same pagans, would not dismiss his evangelism outright.¹⁰ But it is *how* he accommodates their alleged eyewitness testimonies that deserves attention here:

⁸ One could assert a counterexample such as the following: Assuming that demons are purely immaterial, perhaps they manifest, not by virtue of their ontology, but by virtue of having magical powers. While this reply would serve to adequately deflect the objection, it would then become an objection to my upcoming case against psychokinesis.

⁹ Augustine is particularly invoking the transformation of Ulysses's companions into beasts and the morphing of the Arcadians into wolves. See *De Civitate Dei* XVIII. 17.

¹⁰ G. R. Evans says that 'there is good authority for the view that magicians can sometimes really perform the marvels credited to them [...] It is no good his simply dismissing these evidences [...] if he wants to convince his

I cannot [...] believe that even the body, much less the mind, can really be changed into bestial forms and lineaments by any reason, art, or power of the demons; but the phantasm of a man which even in thought or dreams goes through innumerable changes, may, when the man's senses are laid asleep or overpowered, be presented to the senses of others in a corporeal form, in some indescribable way unknown to me, so that men's bodies themselves may lie somewhere, alive, indeed, yet with their senses locked up much more heavily and firmly than by sleep, while that phantasm, as it were embodied in the shape of some animal, may appear to the senses of others and may even seem to the man himself to be changed, just as he may seem to himself in sleep to be so changed, and to bear burdens; and these burdens, if they are real substances, are borne by the demons, that men may be deceived by beholding at the same time the real substance of the burdens and the simulated bodies of the beasts of burden.¹¹

pagan readers of the soundness of the Christian view'. *Augustine on Evil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 108.

¹¹ Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* XVIII. 18, tr. by Marcus Dods, *The City of God by Saint Augustine of Hippo* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009), pp. 466-467.

It is not that the bodies of certain people suddenly transform; rather, it is likely due, says Augustine, to the demons' ability to produce a phantasy of the transmutation in the minds of the percipients (whether it one who perceives their own transmutation or an outside eyewitness of another's transmutation). Gillian R. Evans explains that

a phantasy of a man's mind [...] could perhaps take on the form of a body by some kind of projection, and be somehow presented to the perceptions of others. It may even seem to the man himself that he is changed. [...] We are dealing, not with real change, but with deceiving appearances, and those, as we know, are well within the capacity of demons.¹²

Demons, then, traffic in the art of illusion through the manipulation of the human imagination. And where more than one person is involved, the *phantasma* (a fabricated but illusory mental projection) could be coordinated in some way to affect any and all persons 'observing' that *phantasma*. It would be something analogous to, or identical with, a visual hallucination. This is perhaps why pagan reports of groups of people transforming into wolves and back again seem authentic not only to the agents themselves but also to external eyewitnesses. I shall thus refer to this hypothetical phenomenon of the demonic inciting of a *phantasma* as *psycho-projection* – a phenomenon that could be, by extension, an auditory hallucination as well.

¹² G. R. Evans, *Augustine on Evil*, p. 108. Ina Ivanovska insists that, for Augustine, 'it is the capacity of demonic or angelic *bodies* that allow them to perform such stunts'. 'The Demonology of Saint Augustine of Hippo' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Saint Louis University, 2011), p. 14; emphasis in the original. For my purposes here, I shall take this phenomenon to be, *contra* Ivanovska, a mental power of sorts conducive to mere cognitive interaction.

Psycho-projection is a workable theory that poses an alternative explanation of any experiences that appear to evince a (quasi-) material constitution of demons. It could be that the perceived demon is somehow triggering a hallucinatory projection of a beastly form or sound (or whatever is being experienced). From the percipient's standpoint, the demon would appear to have visible form but in reality it would be a mental projection – a *psycho*-projection – caused by the unknown cognitive influence of that demon. It would be analogous to how certain hypnotic suggestions have been known to make it appear to a percipient that there is something happening 'out there' when in fact there isn't.¹³ If a demon could act as a sort of hypnotist and could influence a human mind to project a false image, then the percipient may come to believe that what she sees is a real encounter with a (quasi-) material demon. Psycho-projection, then, is consonant with all of the data one might have in an alleged perception of a demon. Moreover, it would have the added benefit of being equally accommodating of all of the evidence we have for the demons being purely immaterial spirits.

Hence, despite the possibility of dismissing all testimonials to (quasi-) material demons on grounds that they are all overlaid with faulty interpretive frameworks, the pure immaterialist is able to accommodate the same experiential data by offering a competing hypothesis consistent with pure immaterialism, namely psycho-projection. If this is possible, then any credible testimony affirming demonic (quasi-) materialism would be successfully neutralised as putative counter-evidence.

¹³ Psychologists refer to this phenomenon as *hypnotic hallucination*. See Richard A. Bryant and David Mallard, 'Seeing Is Believing: The Reality Of Hypnotic Hallucinations', *Consciousness And Cognition: An International Journal*, 12 (2003), pp. 219-230; Theodore Xenophone Barber and David Smith Calverley, 'An Experimental Study of "Hypnotic" (Auditory and Visual) Hallucinations', *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 68 (1964), pp. 13-20.

6.3 Theological Objections to the Immateriality of Demons

In this section, I shall explore what I consider to be a class of objections that could be offered against the pure immateriality of the demons based on a broader canon, viz. passages in the Bible beyond the ones I have cited in favour of such pure immaterialism. In anticipating objections herein, there are passages that putatively imply the (quasi-) materialism of Satan on the basis of alleged mind-independent encounters (whether pertaining to visible, audible, or tangible manifestations). As long as one assumes that the ontology of Satan is archetypal of the demons, such passages, if indicative of (quasi-) materialism, would contradict pure immaterialism. If there exists any canonical passage that implies a Satanic or demonic manifestation such as an apparition, then such an apparitional occurrence would imply that that being would have physical properties. For examples, the Bible informs readers that Satan reveals himself to Eve, that he visits Jesus during his wilderness fast, and that he can masquerade as an angel of light (just to name a few). If such encounters are referring to public, real-world spectacles then we may have evidence for Satan (and so also his demons) having (quasi-) material properties with which to be seen, heard, or felt. In a representative statement of this view, C. Samuel Storms opines that, given such data noted here, 'demons can appear to us in various forms, both spiritual and physical.'¹⁴ Sometimes such apparitions are thought to be graphic. C. Fred Dickason, for example, specifies that when 'Scripture records their appearance, they assume hideous and fearsome forms like animals.'¹⁵ Of course *how* they may do this is a matter of dispute and not explained by Storms, Dickason, et al. But having tangible

¹⁴ C. Samuel Storms, *Tough Topics: Biblical Answers to 25 Challenging Questions* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2013), p. 157.

¹⁵ Dickason, *Angels*, p. 176.

properties of any sort would seem to support, at least initially, a (quasi-) material constitution.¹⁶

Therefore, I take it that such scriptural data that includes references to anything like demonic appearances, embodied incarnations, or physical manifestations of other sorts, constitute objections – no matter how strong or weak – to pure immaterialism. Some of these passages (in the context of being proof-texts for quasi-materialism) appear in the writings of Christian philosophers, either implicitly or explicitly, from the Patristic era to the medieval era. For a sampling of this phenomenon, see Chapter 2.

I shall argue here that none of the mooted biblical passages actually supports (quasi-) materialism. This is to say that I believe that none of those passages that might initially appear to imply some sort of physical manifestation(s) actually do. And since not, then neither do we need to compromise scripture's normal use of 'spirit' and so there is no threat to pure immaterialism. Let us look now at each of these objections in the order in which they are based in the Bible.

Passage #1: The Serpent's tempting of Eve in the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3.1-6 is likely an instance of an apparition of Satan.

In Genesis 3.1-6, the author(s) communicate the initial conditions under which sin originally entered the world.¹⁷ The account begins with the appearance of a serpent in the

¹⁶ This is obviously not the only interpretation of the putative apparitions in the Bible. In fact Dickason himself considers such manifestations to be the results of their 'supernatural powers' (*Angels: Elect & Evil*, p. 177). What is *unspecified* is whether a 'supernatural power' might be the power to condense one's finer material body into a denser, visible form that may be seen as 'hideous and fearsome.'

¹⁷ It has been in vogue to assert the Documentary Hypothesis that Genesis (and the rest of the Pentateuch) was authored by a community of Israelites over time (commonly differentiated by the Jahwist, Elohist, Priestly, and Deuteronomic traditions). For a thorough treatment of the background and development of the hypothesis (along with some critical remarks), see Roland Kenneth Harrison's impressive and thorough

Garden of Eden which then beguiles Eve into eating the forbidden fruit. The passage reads in context:

Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden '?" And the woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, lest you die.'" And the serpent said to the woman, "You surely shall not die! "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make *one* wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

Marvin E. Tate reports (based on this familiar narrative about the temptation of Eve by 'the serpent' and the subsequent Rabbinic thoughts that had developed) that it is 'not

contribution in his *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1969), pp. 3-82, 501-541. Though nothing here depends on authorship, the conservative interpretation of Mosaic authorship might provide an Egyptian motif here which represents its god Atum as a serpent. But if a communal redaction of Genesis occurs in a later Babylonian context, it would not be surprising that a serpent would be invoked here given the snake-dragon symbol of the supreme Babylonian city-god Marduk. Either way, the ancient enemies of the Hebrews utilised serpents as icons of power and wisdom.

surprising that a long line of Christian explanation takes the serpent as Satan in disguise.’¹⁸ Indeed, Genesis 3 might serve as an interesting example of how demons (if indeed ‘the serpent’ represents either a demon or Satan himself) manifest in a tangible, visible, and even audible way. But just how is one to understand this dramatic portrayal of a bizarre dialogue involving a (presumably literal) talking serpent? One obvious response would be to find the account merely allegorical. But this reply will not suffice for those conservative interpreters who prefer a semi-literal realism here. Assuming the narrative is at least literal in regard to some proto-human in a primeval geographical province that is being tempted by a being called a ‘serpent’, what metaphysical conclusion are we entitled to draw from such an encounter?

The implications here for any pure immaterialist theory are obvious given a traditional interpretation of this account as an extramental encounter. What we would have, at face value, is a clear physical manifestation of Satan or a demon who has adopted an animal form that could, for all intents and purposes, be captured visually with a camcorder.

From what I can tell, there are four conservative interpretations on the table in understanding the Genesis 3 narrative of the temptation.¹⁹ Most of these views assume either a literal or semi-literal interpretation that embraces the idea that Satan, a demon, or some

¹⁸ Marvin Tate, ‘Satan in the Old Testament’, *Review & Expositor*, 89 (1992), p. 467.

¹⁹ By *liberal* I am referring to what Williams broadly identifies as pertaining to ‘the movement in modern Protestantism which during the nineteenth century tried to bring Christian thought into organic unity with the evolutionary world view’ with a view toward realizing ‘a better world,’ a ‘Kingdom of God on earth’. Daniel Day Williams, *God’s Grace and Man’s Hope* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949), p. 22. Finding Williams’s definition inadequate, Dorrien adds ‘reference to the liberal commitment to other kinds of intellectual inquiry (such as historical criticism) [and] to the values and authority of individual reason and experience’. Gary Dorrien, ‘Modernisms in Theology: Interpreting American Liberal Theology, 1805-1950’, *American Journal of Theology & Philosophy*, 23 (2002), p. 202.

other oppressive villain has, in some way, openly manifested himself to Eve. These views are as follows:²⁰

- (i) The serpent could be an actual, talking animal (a reptilian creature or ophidian of sorts) that is cognitively possessed and controlled by Satan (or a demonic villain) himself (this is the view of Augustine; Francis Schaeffer; Franz Delitzsch).²¹
- (ii) The serpent could be an apparitional or corporeal realisation of Satan in the Garden (much like a ghostly haunting experience) (Michael Heiser).²²

²⁰ I am delimiting the views here to *conservative* interpretations, viz. interpretations that take the narrative as indicative of some sort of real malevolent presence in the Garden. One could, of course, interpret 'the serpent' as referring to something other than a real person as first suggested by Philo (Philo, *On the Creation* LVI). For examples of contemporary views, see Elaine Pagels, *The Origin of Satan* (New York: Random House, 1995). In Chapter 2 of Pagels's book, she argues that Satan is but an evolved epithet for Israel's own internal conflict and enmity (p. 49). See David Carr, 'The Politics of Textual Subversion: A Diachronic Perspective on the Garden of Eden Story', *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 112 (1993), pp. 577-598. For Carr, the account is a personified polemic against wisdom. See Karen R. Joines, *Serpent Symbolism in the Old Testament* (Haddonfield, NJ: Haddonfield House, 1974). For Joines, the serpent represents youthfulness, wisdom, and chaos. Also see Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), pp. 232ff.

²¹ See Augustine, *De Genesi Ad Litteram* XXVIII. 35. Francis Schaeffer was a more recent yet notable conservative philosopher to hold this view. See his *Genesis in Space and Time* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1972), pp. 75-80. The Bible is (elsewhere) completely silent on such things as animal possession by demons which would make this instance a standalone event. A possible exception occurs in the exorcism of the Gadarene demoniacs in Matthew 8.28-33 (also reported in Mark 5 and Luke 8) where the demons possessing the two men implore Jesus to 'send us into the herd of swine' (v. 31). When Jesus dispatches them to the nearby swine, Matthew notes that 'the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and perished in the waters.' But I am not sure this is the result of the demons' own powers since the demons do not seem to have entered the swine on their own accord ('If You are going to cast us out, [you] send us into the herd of swine,' Matt. 8.31). Thus, any appeal to animal possession as the justification for Satan's manifestation in the Garden would be based on controversial speculation. Also see Franz Delitzsch, *A New Commentary on Genesis: Vol. I* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1888), pp. 146-149.

²² E.g. Michael S. Heiser, 'The Nachash (שָׁחָדָה) and His Seed: Some Explanatory Notes on Why the Serpent in Genesis 3 Wasn't a Serpent', <<http://www.scribd.com/doc/68024391/Serpent-Seed-Dr-Michael-S-Heiser>> [accessed 25 March 2015]. Though the Old Testament does admit of a Satan figure as an adversary and an opposing menace to God, it isn't until around the first century during Second Temple Judaism that Satan was

(iii) The serpent could be a gifted, self-conscious animal that has no affiliation with any otherworldly demon (Josephus).²³

(iv) 'The serpent' could be an iconographic term meant to designate the *character* of a spiritual being (perhaps Satan) in the Garden who communicates *internally* and whose presence does not involve either a serpentine apparition or the literal embodiment of an ophidian animal (M. M. Kalisch).²⁴

Now, it seems to me that out of these four options, only (ii) would require an overtly (quasi-) materialist theory if Satan is employing no special powers with which to manifest. Interpretation (i) is consistent with pure immaterialism but would envisage a special power had

ultimately (but subsequently) attached to the figure in the Garden. This view was affirmed by the Alexandrian Jews as evidenced by Wisdom 3.23-24:

for God created us for incorruption, and made us in the image of his own eternity, but through the devil's envy death entered the world, and those who belong to his company experience it'

Additional support for this view rests on the fact that by the time Christianity was born, it was unquestionable amongst Pharisaic Jews that the serpent in the Garden of Eden was to be identified as Satan. This is reflected in few New Testament passages as the following:

'And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him' (Revelation 12.9)

'And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years' (Revelation 20.2)

²³ E.g. Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* I. 4. Support for this is the fact that the serpent is simply classified along with the other animals ('[being] more crafty than any other beast of the field,' Genesis 3.1) and made specially deserving of the divine curse that is described in vivid, physical detail later on. Also see *The New Bible Commentary*, ed. by Francis Davidson, A. M. Stibbs, and E. F. Kevan (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965), p. 79. This is the most popular view amongst conservative academics.

²⁴ E.g. M. M. Kalisch, *A Historical and Critical Commentary on the Old Testament, with a New Translation: Genesis* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, and Roberts, 1858), pp. 79-81.

by ‘the serpent’ that could account for the visible, spatial nature of the encounter. As for (iii), I have deep reservations about which ophidian species might at one time have been capable of intellectual autonomy and the ability to vocalise. Though such is baldly conceivable in an age permissive of the miraculous, it comes across as an anomaly when we consider the wider biblical landscape of animals apart from this Edenic episode (especially animals under the taxonomy of squamata). And those motivated to remove the superstitious elements from Genesis’ primeval history will likely find such an interpretation unsatisfying. As for the remaining interpretation (iv), it is quite plausible. If we already assume that Satan has no magical ability to create an animal's vocal chords, then this interpretation preserves a rather conservative reading of Genesis 3.²⁵

I have noted that, regarding the Edenic encounter, there are four possible conservative interpretations of ‘the serpent’. Interpretations (i), (iii), and (iv) do not entail (quasi-) materialism. And interpretation (iv) strikes me as a plausible one – one that preserves the notion of Satan being purely immaterial without adding any magical powers to Satan. As such, there is nothing about Genesis 3 that leads us to prefer interpretation (ii). The episode just does not entail or require a materialist or quasi-materialist interpretation *even when interpreted as a literal encounter of sorts*. This is enough to consider Genesis 3.1-6 as offering no grounds for arguing that the ontological constitution of Satan and the demons is (quasi-) material. We shall now move to the next passage that may lead one to object to the pure immateriality of demons.

²⁵ This is one of the reasons the classic commentator Adam Clarke rejected the idea that this could have been a snake. See his *The Holy Bible with a Commentary and Critical Notes, Volume I: Genesis to Deuteronomy* (London: Thomas Tegg and Son, 1836), pp. 50-51. Clarke’s alternative, an ape, is no doubt susceptible to the same criticism.

Passage #2: The 'sons of God' of Genesis 6.1-4 are demons and they are said to copulate with the 'daughters of men.' Only material, male persons can copulate reproductively with women.

As a datum for ancient Jewish and Christian source material in determining the metaphysics of demons, no passage is cited more frequently by Christian philosophers and theologians than Genesis 6.1-4.²⁶ Recall from Chapter 2 how the 'sons of God' had been historically associated with the 'watchers' of I Enoch.²⁷ Contained in I Enoch's narrative is an unconcealed description about demons (fallen angels) copulating with women and producing offspring. The connection with Genesis 6, then, is understandable considering how similar it appears in its own narrative:

When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose. Then the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years." The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man and they

²⁶ E.g. Justin Martyr, *The Second Apology of Justin V*; Athenagoras, *A Plea for Christians XXV*. For modern appeals, see, e.g., Robin Routledge, "'My Spirit' in Genesis 6:1-4", *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, 20 (2011), pp. 232-251; Gregory Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil: Constructing a Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), p. 314; Robert C. Newman, 'The Ancient Exegesis of Genesis 6:2, 4', *Grace Theological Journal*, 5 (1984), pp. 13-36.

²⁷ See I Enoch 6.1-6; 15.8 – 16.2; Cf. II Enoch 18; 29.4f. There are also suggested parallels to the Book of Jubilees, Damascus Document, Wisdom of Solomon, 3 Maccabees, and 3 Baruch (among other fragments of Qumran).

bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown.

If the 'sons of God' are in fact fallen angels, it is difficult to see how demons could be purely immaterial creatures since such beings would be sensually driven to their 'crime' on the basis of finding the 'daughters of man [...] attractive.' One must imagine them corporeal and even organic. Now, without engaging in a full theological explanation of the passage, one must attempt to address the crucial question that presents itself: Does the 'sons of God' likely describe fallen angels? After all, the 'sons of God' are nowhere indicated to be either specifically angelic or even supernatural beings except in a few unrelated passages in Job.²⁸ It is worth noting that the Pentateuch itself specifically uses this divine filial description of ordinary *Israel*.²⁹

As with the previous discussion, my interest here is relegated to merely deciphering whether Genesis 6 serves as indirect evidence for demonic materialism. Given the hermeneutical controversies associated with this passage (not unlike Genesis 3), it seems not. At least two viable views that construe the 'sons of God' as referring to persons other than demons have surfaced in the course of the history of interpreting this passage. First, some early philosophers and theologians have claimed that the 'sons of God' are to be understood as referring to the Godly lineage of Seth.³⁰ Secondly, it might well be that the 'sons of God' is an

²⁸ Cf. Job 1.6; 2.1; 38.7.

²⁹ Cf. Exodus 4.22; Deuteronomy 14.1. 'Sons of God' is also used as an epithet for national leaders in the Ancient Near East; e.g., Deuteronomy 32.8.

³⁰ E.g. Julius Africanus, *Chronographia*; Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* XV. 22.

expression referring to the self-exalting titles of kings – a view held by some modern scholars.³¹ The justification for a non-demonic connotation of ‘sons of God’ resides essentially in the fact that divine judgement in the form of a deluge is unleashed *only on mankind* – a peculiar scope of retribution if the ‘sons of God’ are themselves not human beings. Thirdly, it seems apparent that the angelic order in some sense lacks the capacity for marriage (cf. Mark 12.25; Matthew 22.30). As John L. McKenzie points out regarding Jesus’s appeal to angels in denying marriage in the eschatological resurrection of the saints, ‘The example of angels refers to a life in which sex plays no part.’³² Fourthly, neither is there anything *prima facie* special about the context and use of the phrase ‘sons of God’ or their copulative union with the daughters of man unless one insists that there is a supernatural aetiology requisite for the Nephilim, viz. the allegedly supernatural giants said to be the offspring of the ‘sons’-daughters union. But the Hebrew *n^epilîm* is used in conjunction with *gibbôrîm* (‘men of old/renown’) which likely suggests that the *n^epilîm* refers, not to being *physically* extraordinary in height (which might suggest a supernatural parent), but to the *positional magnitude* of their heroic stature;³³ hence, there is no reason not to think that the *n^epilîm* are ordinary human men of a high (or ‘giant’) calibre, *e.g. men of renown*.³⁴ To provide a modern example, consider the U.N. President of the

³¹ E.g. Leroy Birney, ‘An Exegetical Study of Genesis 6:1-4’, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 13 (1970), pp. 43-52; Walter Kaiser Jr., *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, ed. by W. Kaiser, P. Davids, F. F. Bruce, and M. Brauch (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), pp. 106-108.

³² John L. McKenzie, ‘The Gospel According to Matthew’, *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. by Raymond Brown, Joseph Fitzmyer, and Roland Murphy (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1968), p. 101.

³³ Birney, ‘An Exegetical Study of Genesis 6:1-4’, pp. 50-52; Kaiser, *Hard Sayings*, p. 108.

³⁴ Genesis 10.8 uses this designation for Nimrod as an aristocrat.

General Assembly, Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, who recently called the late Nelson Mandela a ‘giant of history.’³⁵ I suspect that Mandela’s height was not the focus of his laudatory remarks.

Genesis 6.1-4 is not free from ambiguity and still remains the epicentre of ongoing debate regarding the identification of the primeval angelic sins that led to the alleged subsequent fallout. But attempts to learn about the metaphysics of demons on the basis of the interpretation of Genesis 6 that sees demons as having abused their angelic status by copulating with terrestrial women is dubious at best. And since the Bible elsewhere seems to signify that pride (*tuphóo*) was the original sin of deviant angels (and not sexual intercourse), the objector must look elsewhere for a sufficient objection to pure immaterialism.³⁶ We shall now move to the New Testament in looking to any passages that may lead one to object to the pure immateriality of demons.

Passage #3: According to Mark 1.12-13, Matthew 4.1-11, and Luke 4.1-13, Satan physically appears to Jesus and tempts him during his forty-day wilderness trek.

The Synoptic accounts of Jesus all agree that the launching of Jesus’s ministry after his public baptism began with his 40-day fast in his wandering in the wilderness (an apparent connexion with the Israelites’ iconic exodus out of Egypt). I shall use Matthew’s more developed presentation as representative of the event in question:

³⁵ ‘General Assembly President’s Remarks’ (July 18, 2012), <<http://www.un.org/en/events/mandeladay/2012/ga-message.shtml>> [accessed 21 April 2015].

³⁶ E.g. I Timothy 3.6. Some appeals are also made to Isaiah 14.12-19 and Ezekiel 28.13-16 in describing the original sin of the fallen angels. Even though it is doubtful that those passages refer to fallen angels, those passages identify the condemnation of the deviant angels on the basis of their thirst for power and pride. There is no hint of sexual copulation with human beings. The ‘Doctors of the Church’ in the Middle Ages underscored this interpretation in their explanation as to the genesis of sin amongst the morally innocent.

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written, "'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, "'He will command his angels concerning you', and "'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, "'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'" Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him (Matthew 4.1-11).

The significant detail of the story is that Jesus has a deliberate confrontation with Satan in the form of three distinct but overlapping temptations that feature Satan's luring of Jesus to

different geographical landmarks. Some who believe in demons are quick to press the point that Satan, then, must be capable of apparitional manifestations as implied by these temptation narratives.³⁷ To cite a contemporary example, Merrill F. Unger does not hesitate to call Matthew's temptation account a 'personal appearance of Satan' which is typical of many Christian who believe in demons.³⁸

Upon careful inspection, however, what we find is that there is *no* visible apparition by Satan that occurs in any of the temptation narratives. Each of the Synoptic accounts begins with the straightforward fact that 'Jesus was led up by the Spirit' or 'The Spirit immediately drove him out' and that, subsequently, 'the tempter [...] came to him' or that 'he was [...] being tempted by Satan/the devil.'³⁹ The identification of the tempter as Satan is not in question by who believe in demons and neither do I dispute it. However, some interpreters (e.g. Pierre Benoit and Kenneth Waters) are more cautious about the temptation narrative being in any sense a genuine manifestation event since it is couched in apocalyptic visionary language.⁴⁰ But missing from these accounts is any explicit apparitional *language* in the passages since they do not say anything like 'Satan appeared' (*ho satanas ephano*) or 'Satan manifested' (*ho satanas ephanerothe*). The Synoptic usage of 'came to him' (*prosēlthon ... auto*) in reference to Satan/the tempter no more carries an apparitional connotation than the post-temptation postscript of Matthew regarding the ministering angels when they 'came' (*prosēlthon*) to Jesus

³⁷ Book II of John Milton's (17th century) *Paradise Regained* may have influenced many to see Satan's temptation of Jesus as an extra-mental apparitional event.

³⁸ Merrill F. Unger, *Biblical Demonology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1994), p. 68.

³⁹ Matthew 4.1, 3; Mark 1.12-13; Luke 4.1-2. The Synoptics pose variants of the selfsame event.

⁴⁰ See Pierre Benoit, *The Passion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, tr. by Benet Weatherhead (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1969), p. 204; Also see Kenneth Waters's relevant remarks over Matthew 4's peculiar use of 'holy city' in his 'Matthew 27:52-53 as Apocalyptic Apostrophe: Temporal-Spatial Collapse in the Gospel of Matthew', *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 122 (2003), pp. 494-502.

to minister to him.⁴¹ We should not think that the *proselthōn* of the demons in any way entails a metaphysical (much less physical) component any more than the phenomenal arrival of a thought might 'come' to me in the middle of the night. In this manner, Satan merely tempts Jesus through his ordinary means of cognitive interaction between minds. As for Jesus' being led to different geographical locales by Satan, either Jesus was prompted mentally to move to this or that location or Satan imposed a visionary experience on Jesus such that he was imagining that Satan 'took him' to the Temple, a high mountain, and the 'kingdoms of the world.'⁴² And this latter suggestion has already been posed by New Testament scholars that are not motivated by any agenda to affirm one kind of metaphysics of demons over another.⁴³ Thus, if interpreters are not committed to seeing this passage as a genuine manifestation account, then no information whatsoever about the ontological make-up of demons can be teased out of this temptation narrative. We shall now move to another New Testament passage that may lead one to object to the hypothesis that demons are purely immaterial.

⁴¹ Matthew 4.11; cf. Mark 1.13. Many New Testament commentators point out that the angelic ministry in the temptation was corporeal and 'impl[ies] the provision of food' to the starving Jesus. Graham Twelftree, 'Temptation of Jesus', *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. by Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), p. 825. But this is not a commentary on *proselthōn* ('[they] came') itself but with its contextual usage of *diekonoun* ('[they] were ministering'). The root term *diakoneo* is variably used to connote either a figurative form of servitude (i.e. Matthew 10.45; Acts 19.22) or a literal waiting on someone as if at a dinner table (i.e. Luke 12.37; 22.26f). The latter is only suggested given the antecedent Old Testament account of an angelic ministry of food service in I Kings 19.5-8. And even if this corporeal visitation was the preferred connotation of the angelic ministry to Jesus, this could easily be accommodated as being the result of God's power and not that of the angels. It thus begs the question to suppose that Satan came (*proselthōn*) to Jesus in a corporeal way.

⁴² The language of bringing someone somewhere is not unusual in visionary encounters as can be seen in other passages that are clearly visionary, i.e. Ezekiel 8.3 ('He put out the form of a hand and took me by a lock of my head, and the Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven and brought me in visions of God to Jerusalem, to the entrance of the gateway of the inner court that faces north [...]') and Revelation 4.1c ('Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this').

⁴³ See Luigi Schiavo, 'The Temptation Of Jesus: The Eschatological Battle And The New Ethic Of The First Followers Of Jesus In Q', *Journal For The Study Of The New Testament*, 25 (2002), pp. 141-164. Schiavo lays out three categories of interpretations of which the visionary account is but one.

Passage #4: Satan is specifically said in II Corinthians 11.14 to (occasionally) masquerade as an angel of light, and masquerading is a physical phenomenon.

In Chapter 11 of Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, he attempts to rehabilitate the Greek community of Corinth (a province west of Athens) which he believes has been seduced into sin by Satan through the cunning wisdom of counterfeit apostles. Paul expresses his lack of surprise that there are such alleged fellow apostles capable of deceiving their listeners into a false gospel. And why not be surprised? Because, he writes, it is 'no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light' (11.14). It is taken by some readers of II Corinthians (e.g. Peter R. Schemm Jr., John Phillips, David E. Garland, Linda L. Belleville, Merrill F. Unger, Robert Morey, Grant McColly, and William Caldwell) that Satan's deceiving capabilities apparently include the ability to appear in a way that a normal onlooker would easily confuse with an angelic manifestation, thus making Satan a virtual master of disguise.⁴⁴ The confusion, so we assume, is due to the fabricated similarity of *appearances* between both demon and angel and, thus, one could be made manifest to look like the other. Moreover, two first-century (A.D.) passages within the Jewish tradition offer a description of Satan as one who appears in the visible form of a beautiful angel (*Life of Adam and Eve* 9.1; *Apocalypse of Moses* 17.1-2). Lee Martin McDonald remarks: 'Whether Paul knew these documents is uncertain, but the tradition

⁴⁴ Peter R. Schemm Jr., 'The Agents of God: Angels', *A Theology for the Church*, ed. by Daniel L. Akin (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2007), p. 305; John Phillips, *Exploring 2 Corinthians: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2002), pp. 251-254; David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 1999), p. 485; Linda L. Belleville, *2 Corinthians*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), pp. 282-283; Unger, *Biblical Demonology*, p. 64; Robert Morey, *Satan's Devices* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1993), pp. 30-31; Grant McColly, 'Paradise Lost', *The Harvard Theological Review*, 32 (1939), p. 192; William Caldwell, 'The Doctrine of Satan: III. In the New Testament', *The Biblical World*, 41 (1913), p. 169.

that lies behind them is also assumed by Paul.⁴⁵ Consequently, II Corinthians 11.14 may be support for the idea that Satan can appear as an angel.

The force of this interpretation is significant since we tend to see visibility as entailing physicality of some sort (as I think one should, at least apart from God's direct intervention or any additional reason to think otherwise). If Satan can indeed appear as a sort of wolf in sheep's clothing, then this phenomenon would point to Satan's bearing properties that would make him visible. And if Paul does have the tradition that underlies the *Life of Adam and Eve* and the *Apocalypse of Moses* in mind, then it is perhaps difficult to think that Paul did not accept the ability of Satan to visibly manifest.

By way of response, Paul's use of 'disguise' (*metaschēmatizetai*) is unlikely to be referring to a physically visible occurrence (though it *can* have this connotation as it does in other Pauline passages⁴⁶). It is important to note that the root word used here is also used in its immediate context in verse 13 where the false teachers are also said to be 'disguising' (*metaschēmatizetai*) themselves, but in their case as counterfeit apostles; and verse 15 further adds that 'his servants also disguised (*metaschēmatizetai*) themselves as workers of righteousness.' Does this suggest that the false apostles and their followers could *physically* and *visibly* disguise themselves – as if to say that the false apostles were adept at costuming? And just what would 'righteousness' look like anyway? Surely this 'disguise' has to do with *the*

⁴⁵ Lee Martin McDonald, '2 Corinthians', *The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: Acts-Philemon*, ed. by Craig A. Evans, Isobel A. H. Combes, and Daniel M. Gurtner (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2004), p. 442.

⁴⁶ Philippians 3.21 uses *metaschematisei* as a deliberate reference to 'the [physical] body' (*to soma*). See Phillips, *Exploring 2 Corinthians*, pp. 251-252. However, as commentator Paul Barnett observes, despite multiple occurrences of *metaschematisei*, 'none of which references gives a clear idea of the meaning' of the Apostle Paul's usage in II Corinthians 11. See Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), p. 523, n. 3.

illusion of doctrinal purity and moral virtue and not with the cosmetic issues of *physicality* or *appearance*. As such, Paul is not surprised that there would be false apostles and teachers since deception is a game played by the worst of God's creatures, Satan. As tradition reports, even God's supreme enemy can appear to be an 'angel of light' despite his true identity as an 'angel of darkness' (i.e. I Thessalonians 5.5).⁴⁷ And this is a well-established interpretation of Paul's admonition in II Corinthians, having been offered by other New Testament scholars and commentators (e.g. Robert H. Gundry, Murray J. Harris, Charles Hodge, and R. C. H. Lenski).⁴⁸

To better ground this interpretation, it needs to be noted that being an 'angel of light' does not entail that the 'light' (*phōs*) so described be a reference to a bright, visible manifestation of wavelengths or quanta. Rather, it is more likely to be understood in accord with Paul's normal usage throughout his correspondence with the Corinthians:

'the Lord comes who will both bring to light [*phōtisei*]

the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts' (I Corinthians 4.5).

'the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light [*phōtismōn*] of the gospel of the glory of Christ' (II Corinthians 4.4).

⁴⁷ Also compare with Acts 26.18; Romans 13.12; II Corinthians 6.14; Ephesians 5.8; I Peter 2.9; I John 1.5-6; 2.8-9.

⁴⁸ See Robert H. Gundry, *Commentary on the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010), pp. 721-722; Murray J. Harris, *The New International Greek Testament Commentary: The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), pp. 771-775; Charles Hodge, *2 Corinthians*, The Crossway Classic Commentaries, ed. by Alister McGrath and J. I. Packer (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1995), p. 204; R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of II Corinthians* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1948), pp. 1256-1258.

‘For God, who said, ‘Light [*phōs*] shall shine out of darkness’, is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light [*phōtismōn*] of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ’ (II Corinthians 4.6).

This local context of II Corinthians 11 is quite telling. ‘Light’ is better understood, not as a visible form of radiation, but rather as a metaphor for contrasting the good with depravity and deception (viz. ‘darkness’). Even though ‘angel of light’ seems to reflect those passages from the *Life of Adam and Eve* and the *Apocalypse of Moses* where Satan’s physical transmutation is clearly in view, Murray J. Harris explains that the expression

could be a Pauline coinage, prompted on the one hand by the common association of Satan with darkness (6:14-15) and deception (4:4) and of God or Christ with light and illumination (4:6; Rom. 13:12,14; Eph. 5:11-14), and on the other hand by his own experience and observation of Satan's various stratagems (2:11).⁴⁹

I also note that the same Greek term, in its being used symbolically in other ancient contexts, is also used in Plato’s famous dialogue regarding his much-celebrated Allegory of the Cave where

⁴⁹ Harris, *The New International Greek Testament Commentary*, pp. 774-775.

'light' is taken to refer figuratively to intellectual illumination.⁵⁰ The use of 'light' is more akin to the popular saying, 'I have seen the light!' and 'I have been enlightened!' in *light's* association with *comprehensibility, truth, and purity*.⁵¹ As such, the possible allusion by Paul to Satan's transfiguring himself as a shining angel in *Adam and Eve* and the *Apocalypse of Moses* are not necessarily being remembered in II Corinthians for the *how* of Satan's deception, rather they may be remembered only for the *fact* of such deception and nothing more. And this is consistent with, if not better understood by, a reading that sees 'angel of light' as a metaphorical reference to virtuous teaching.

Therefore, the apparitional interpretation of 'angel of light' as evidence for Satan being a (quasi-) material being is predicated on weak exegesis. The only information we have about Satan, according to II Corinthians 11, is that he is a villainous manipulator of doctrine as are the false apostles. A demonstration of the demons' ontology is not in view here, and so we, once again, do not have a viable objection to pure immaterialism.

6.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have surveyed two categories of objections – philosophical and theological – that could be levelled against my theory that demons are purely immaterial. I argued that neither the philosophical objections nor the theological objections are sufficient to undercut or undermine pure immaterialism as the right description. Given the positive arguments I have offered on behalf of such pure immaterialism (in chapters 4 and 5), and now

⁵⁰ Cf. Plato, *Republic* VII. 514a.

⁵¹ Paul elsewhere parallels this sentiment and meaning of II Corinthians 11.14 in his later letter to Timothy: 'The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons' (I Timothy 4.1).

the failure of the objections against it, I shall consider my case for the pure immaterialism of the demons to be presently vindicated.

In the next chapter, I shall move on to discuss the basic power of the demons. Recall that I think that demons are able to interact cognitively with other spirits. As such, I shall begin by assessing whether it is even possible to ascribe to demons the ability, as purely immaterial spirits, to be causally related to other purely immaterial spirits (viz. soul-soul interaction). I shall also discuss whether demons might have some additional power, such as the ability to move physical objects or manipulate matter, since such a power could be used as an alternative explanation for how they, as purely immaterial spirits, might manifest in a physical universe after all. Perhaps they can fabricate a temporary physical body through which to act. In Chapter 8, I shall argue that the demons likely do not have such an extra ability and, so, they only have their basic ability to interact with other souls cognitively. But first it is to the initial question of the coherence of soul-soul interaction that we turn in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7

THE COHERENCE OF THE NOTION OF SOUL-SOUL INTERACTION

7.1 Introduction

My objective up to now has been to defend pure immaterialism by showing it to be (a) a coherent metaphysical theory of the demons' ontology, and (b) a more plausible alternative to the convoluted theories offered by Christian philosophers since the second century. Thus, I began my defence by arguing that the concept of a purely immaterial mind or self is not logically impossible as even contemporary materialist philosophers acknowledge. In addition, I argued against the idea that an enduring identity must be rooted in having a material body and that in order to be a person one must essentially be (at least in part) a material being. I then went on to argue that the prior probability of demons being (quasi-) material beings is not as high as one might think. By all lights, the metaphysical options seem equiprobable. But then I further argued in Chapter 5 that the Bible offers *prima facie* support for thinking the demons to be immaterial which raises the probability of their being immaterial after all. I also surveyed those biblical passages in Chapter 6 that seem (to some) to imply that demons have corporeal attributes, and I argued that there are no indications in those passages that would suggest this. Accordingly, we lack any positive support from the Bible for supposing that demons are (quasi-) material. But a comprehensive metaphysical theory of demons does not end at a description of their nature. Traditionally, demons are supposed to have a role in creation, in that they interact with the physical world. This raises the question: if demons are indeed purely immaterial creatures, then how are we to understand their alleged interaction with material things?

Traditionally, most Christians have assumed that demons (whether perceived as purely immaterial spirits or not) can interact with the physical world and be sensed by percipients at will. This has led some (like Origen and Bonaventure) to renege on their commitment to the utter immateriality of the demons, opting instead for an ontology that is quasi-material. As they say, the demons are composed of a fine matter (some say 'aerial' or 'ethereal') that is undetectable to the ordinary sense receptors of humans. As with air and water vapour, such fine substances can be made to act on physical objects. But this solution is not available to those who believe in demons (like Thomas Aquinas and Mortimer Adler) who assert that demons are purely immaterial. Their resolution is to posit what I call the 'magical powers hypothesis' wherein demons would have a supernatural power that would allow them, as the occasion arises, to move upon physical objects and the sensory receptors of percipients. For the sake of simplicity, I shall refer to this power as *psychokinesis* – that some souls *just can* move upon physical objects. Virtually all believers in demons assume that demons have this psychokinetic ability that has been thought to produce extravagant results (i.e. alterations of the natural order). According to tradition, this psychokinetic ability is a specially bestowed power that was perhaps originally granted by God in the demons' pre-fallen state as good angels.

What alternatives are there to this magical powers hypothesis? I have laid out a theory that does not suffer from any of the above challenges. My theory, the reader will recall, holds that demons, as purely immaterial creatures, likely only act in accordance with their pre-existing abilities as immaterial, personal agents barring any reason to think the contrary. As I laid out in Chapter 3, their primary mode of interaction with other souls (whether embodied or

not) is what I have called *cognitive interaction* (CI). In section 3.5.1, I had defined this in the following way:

(CI) Person S_1 is cognitively interacting with person S_2 if and only if S_1 is communicating with S_2 through the mental transmission of thoughts and S_1 is *not* communicating with S_2 through any other means of verbal or non-verbal communication.

On this theory, demons would communicate with other souls in much the same way God communicates in an interior way with human beings. When demons are cognitively interacting with human beings, it is their souls that are interacting with ours. Now, I will argue that there is no evidence to suggest that demons have any kind of psychokinetic power and so their natural abilities should be conceived as being limited to mere CI with other souls. Therefore, it is on this basis that I find it likely that CI is the *exclusive* causal power had by the demons.

Now this means that souls can act on other souls in some delimited way. On the one hand, it seems reasonable that similar substances can affect similar substances. In fact, for many, there is an expectation that this to be a necessary condition for such interaction, which is perhaps one of the reasons why dualism has had a hard time finding followers in recent years. That similar substances can affect or provide the means of knowing similar substances has a long ancestry dating back to the ancient Pre-Socratic doctrine of *homoion-homoioi* ('like for like'). This doctrine finds an original expression in Empedocles:

For 'tis through Earth that Earth we do behold,
Through Ether, divine Ether luminous,
Through Water, Water, through Fire, devouring Fire,
And Love through Love, and Hate through doleful Hate.¹

As Aristotle summarily puts it, 'like [...] is known by like.'² Being the same kind of substance was, and for many still is, a necessary condition for the interactions between separate objects. The possibility of soul-soul interaction is crucial in going forward to discuss how plausible it may be that demons can communicate with other souls. In fact, this is the conclusion I will ultimately seek and so its possibility obviously needs to be settled up front. If this interaction should turn out to be neither comprehensible nor feasible in accounting for the broadest range of *explananda*, then the ability of demons to commerce with others will have to be relegated to an unresolved mystery. And this latter option will not do. In this chapter, I shall first remind readers what this mechanism of communication might look like for unembodied things like angels and demons. Following that, I shall defend the *possibility* of soul-soul interaction. I shall also provide inductive grounds for thinking that soul-soul interaction (as CI) enjoys a non-trivial prior probability over the theory that demons have a psychokinetic power with which to directly interact with the physical world (the 'magical powers hypothesis'). Though the traditional theory offers a possible solution, I shall argue that this alternative has a lower prior probability than CI.

¹ Empedocles, fragment 109, in *The Fragments of Empedocles*, tr. by William Ellery Leonard (Chicago, IL: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1908), p. 50.

² Aristotle, *De Anima* I.2.404^b18, translated from *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, 1, tr. by J. A. Smith, ed. by Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 645.

7.2 What is Soul-Soul Interaction?

I am persuaded (for reasons outlined below) that the obtaining of knowledge in an unembodied thinking subject is not, or would not be, achieved through the act of sensation. Instead, such knowledge would probably be propositional, informational, and, perhaps occasionally, emotional. If an immaterial subject is embodied, then that soul can use the body to acquire such experiential knowledge. The reason for noting this is that it is inconceivable how an unembodied soul might have physical sensations (or anything like them) apart from the apparatus of a physical body. Nicholas Everitt explains how sensations like sight depend on corporeality:

[B]ecause I have eyes at the front of my body but not at the back, I can see what is in front of me, but have to turn around if I am to see what is behind me. But if I have no body, there is nothing to determine in which direction I am looking. If I am supposed to be seeing from a geometrical point in space, it makes no sense to suppose that that point can rotate to reveal what is behind me. "In front" and "behind" can have no meaning if applied to a perceiver without a body; and neither consequently can "up" and "down". There can be no variation in the orientation of a

geometrical point; but such varying orientation is integral to our understanding of what the human visual system is.³

Angels, demons, and any other unembodied souls would not naturally have the ability to perceive an object in space (whereas if they did have such power, it would not be *apart from* God's direct provision). And when we consider that the ordinary process of sight is made possible by the reception and translation of photons impinging on the eyes, it is a wonder how a soul without a sense organ can be said to *physically* interact with such physical energy. The problem gets worse if we attempt to differentiate in a purely mental world which observations, for example, pertain to real objects and which to mere illusions. Everitt explains:

[I]n order for there to be a distinction within my experience between genuinely seeing on the one hand, and having visual hallucinations and misperceptions on the other, I must have a determinate position in space. It is my position in space which partly determines for me at each moment what is then genuinely visible by me; and it gives content to the idea that visual experiences which are of items that are not currently visible by me must be hallucinations or misperceptions, not genuine seeings.⁴

³ Nicholas Everitt, 'Substance Dualism and Disembodied Existence', *Faith and Philosophy*, 17 (2000), pp. 337-338.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 339.

The problem, which also plagues other sensations like touch, is such that it becomes metaphysically impossible to speak of soul-soul interaction as occurring through the mechanism of sensation. Therefore, if we are to suppose that demons communicate at all, it will likely be a cognitive form of the communication of thought as envisioned in my theory. Such a phenomenon can conceivably occur between two souls without them having to rely on sensations that are not features of immaterial subjects. Propositional thinking, knowing, desiring, remembering, believing, and the like seem to lack the need for any sense organ. And these are the sorts of things that can be imparted to a soul from without. Cognition, and so CI, is a very plausible candidate for an unembodied soul's ability to communicate such knowledge that need not depend on sensations (or any other extraneous medium).

7.3 Against the Impossibility of Soul-soul interaction

The traditional view is that demons are legitimate causes (in some sense) of discrete events in history and communicate with other mental subjects as is suggested in the Bible. It is on my theory that this is accomplished exclusively through soul-soul interaction. I take it that any sort of interaction, even if it is just communication, would still be causal in some sense. However, that causal relation would obtain in a wholly non-spatial and nonphysical environment. But Jaegwon Kim wonders how it would be possible, in the absence of a spatial relation, to even have 'causality within a purely mental world'.⁵ In other words, since purely immaterial souls (as in the anthropological case of Cartesian egos) necessarily lack spatiality

⁵ Jaegwon Kim, 'Lonely Souls: Causality and Substance Dualism', in *Soul, Body, and Survival: Essays on the Metaphysics of Human Persons*, ed. by Kevin Corcoran (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 2001), p. 36.

then there must be some alternative to space that helps makes sense of the causal relation between subjects. Kim argues that ‘we seem to be in need of a certain kind of “space” in order for a mental subject (soul A) to distinguish or ‘pick out’ another mental subject (soul B) from among other mental subjects (soul C, soul D, etc.).⁶ Simply acknowledging a nonphysical ‘mental space’ might seem to save the theory, but Kim quickly dismisses its plausibility as he does not have ‘the foggiest idea what such a framework might look like.’⁷ Thus if one follows Kim in holding that causality between objects requires a spatial relation, then any sort of soul-soul causation or interaction would be metaphysically impossible (not the least of which any soul-*body* interaction would be dismissed *a fortiori*). This leads Kim to offer an obviously tongue-in-cheek implication for the inter-commerce of things like immaterial persons:

A purely Cartesian world seems like a pretty lonely place, inhabited by immaterial souls each of which is an island unto itself, totally isolated from all other souls. [... If] we are immaterial souls, [it] would be a lonely place for us.⁸

If Kim is right and the very concept of a causally efficacious immaterial subject is incoherent, then, apart from being causally *isolated*, an uncomfortable dilemma arises. Either one must suppose that demons would not be immaterial things after all, or suppose that demons would just be, *mutatis mutandis*, causally effete (and we default to either giving up the ability of souls

⁶ Ibid., p. 37.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., p. 39. This is repeated again in his more recent *Physicalism, or Something Near Enough* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 84.

to interact or relegating it to a mere mystery). Either way, my theory would be impaled on the horns of this dilemma, for either we sacrifice my understanding of their *ontology* or we sacrifice my understanding of their *communication*. So the challenge here is whether the pure immaterialist can surmount the problem of soul-soul causality as posed by Kim. I think that she can, and that Kim's own sentiment on the subject is not as averse to this as one might think.

Firstly, it is not at all clear how causality *prima facie* entails or (at least) requires some kind of spatiality.⁹ Kim argues that the absence of a spatial matrix makes tracing a causal pathway obscure since we ordinarily trace effects to their causes in terms of spatial contiguity. This much can be granted. But it does not entail that because we are *ignorant* of such a pathway that, therefore, there is no way to justify mental causality. Kim is not entitled to this conclusion. The problem centres on wanting to make sense of such causation apart from a spatial context: 'It is the problem of showing how mental causation is possible, not *whether* it is possible.'¹⁰ But if we can say as much – that such a 'mental space' is metaphysically *possible* though explanatorily obfuscated – then it is unclear how wondering 'How?' is cause for an automatic rejection. Consider David Hume who in his own way complained about the 'how' of justifying causality between ordinary, *physical* objects – objects that are even contiguous with

⁹ Enough critics have challenged Kim on this score that it is not necessary to rehearse all of the objections here. For a sampling, see Andrew Bailey, Joshua Rasmussen, and Luke Horn, 'No Pairing Problem', *Philosophical Studies*, 154, (2011), pp. 349-360; Geoffrey Madell, 'The Road to Substance Dualism', in the *Metaphysics of Consciousness*, ed. by Pierfrancesco Basile, Julian Kiverstein, and Pauline Phemister (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 45-60; David Jehle, 'Kim Against Dualism', *Philosophical Studies*, 130 (2006), pp. 565-578; J. P. Moreland, 'If You Can't Reduce, You Must Eliminate: Why Kim's Version of Physicalism Isn't Close Enough', *Philosophia Christi*, 7 (2005), pp. 463-73. Also worthy of note is E. J. Lowe's reflection on David Hume's attitude about formulating *a priori* notions about such requisites of causality in noting that, for Hume, 'there are simply no *a priori* constraints on what kinds of states or events can enter into causal relationships with one another. As Hume himself puts it at one point: "to consider the matter a priori, any thing may produce any thing"' (*An Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 23).

¹⁰ Jaegwon Kim, 'Mental Causation: What? Me Worry?', *Philosophical Issues*, 6 (1995), p. 128.

each other and spatio-temporally interrelated.¹¹ Even such ordinary causal occurrences seemingly envisage a ‘secret power’ of their own perhaps every bit as mysterious as, say, a ‘mental space’ in which two mental subjects might interact. Hume’s justification for the causal relation seems to have been grounded in the habitual experience (viz. an inductive generalization) of such repeated cause-effect pairings and not in whether the causal relationship could be mechanistically clarified. As J. P. Moreland observes,

the absence of a complete analysis of such [mental causal] contact afflicts physical causality, and this fact weakens the force of Kim’s claim that in the absence of such an analysis regarding Cartesian souls, we are not justified in believing in their existence or causal power.¹²

Thus, one is not reasonably forbidden from inferring soul-soul causation as long as there is a way to trace the causal trajectories of immaterial subjects. What it takes to show *that* there is a causal relation is unaffected by our inability to show *how* that causal relation obtains. Even so, Kim would only caution that one should not make the mistake of conflating the establishing of causal sufficiency with the establishing of causation itself.¹³ But even if epistemically opaque, any alternative to ‘mental space’ as defining a determinate causal relationship will still,

¹¹ See David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* IV. 1 – V. 1.

¹² J. P. Moreland, ‘If You Can’t Reduce, You Must Eliminate’, p. 469.

¹³ Kim levels this charge against John Foster’s use of the nomological theory in justifying causal pairings between mental and physical events. See Kim, ‘Causation, Nomic Subsumption, and the Concept of Event’, *The Journal of Philosophy*, 70 (1973), p. 230.

in Kim's own words, 'enable us to make sense of causal relations between non-spatial mental entities.'¹⁴

Timothy O'Connor, himself no Cartesian dualist, insists that one can conceivably use spatial terms as a useful metaphor. How so? Because it would allow one

to characterize the ordering that structures the interaction of souls in a space-less world. This should not in itself be objectionable, however.¹⁵

This, he continues, would permit one to eschew

external relations within an array in favor of a primitive sort of intrinsic informational state had by each soul, such that it knows 'where' it is 'in relation to' all the others.¹⁶

This, he continues, would make 'all causal interactions [...] a function entirely of intrinsic properties.'¹⁷ Mental subjects, upon communicating with or acting upon another, could

¹⁴ Kim, 'Lonely Souls', p. 37. Kim goes on to speak of a second possibility whereby one can affirm soul-soul interaction without the arbitrary metaphysics of a recondite 'mental space' (see pp. 37-38). In this case one can circumvent the need for some undisclosed kind of spatial proxy altogether by positing a causal relation that is predicated on a non-spatial causal chain. But Kim finds this manoeuvre problematic for he wants to know what it means to have an 'in between' link (that there exists something that mediates between soul A and soul B) in a strictly mental universe. This, Kim fears, must be a failed salvage operation since it attempts to solve a causal connection problem by multiplying the amount of causal connections. I am inclined to agree.

¹⁵ Timothy O'Connor, 'Causality, Mind, and Free Will', *Nous-Supplement: Philosophical Perspectives*, 14 (2000), p. 107.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

commerce with each other as long as the subject had some conventional way to differentiate its relation from one to another (whatever that might be). Even if this rough schema does not work to rescue the anthropological dualist's case of soul-*body* pairing (as O'Connor is quick to mention) it would have no negative bearing at all on my view of intermediary beings engaging in soul-*soul* commerce. But then, what kind of 'intrinsic informational state' exists to make sense, even metaphorically, of soul-soul interaction? This will be the subject of the next section.

7.4 How Soul-Soul Communication Probably Occurs

What can we say about the *concept* of transmitting thoughts between persons (the *how*)? Can such a phenomenon conceivably occur between two souls apart from the necessity of a physical medium *through* which to project? For those medieval thinkers who conceived demons as quasi-material, the solution was easy. Augustine, for example, seems to have suggested that demons have a semi-physical sense perception and transmission mechanism that can pick up and manipulate the bodily traces of human thoughts.¹⁸ It is through this medium that demons are able to read, communicate thoughts, and stir the passions within their victims. And Augustine, in one of his correspondences with Nebridius, goes so far as to suggest the possibility that such internal agitations in human beings are (possibly) demonic movements of fluids inside the body (viz. 'bile') affecting the mind.¹⁹ But this potential solution assumes that demons are (quasi-) material. For the pure immaterialist, any correspondence

¹⁸ Augustine, *De Divinatione Daemonum* IX. 3; Also see Gerard O'Daly, *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987), pp. 122-124.

¹⁹ Augustine, *ibid.*

between two souls apart from a physical universe must be divested of any appeal to a physical medium. After all, the point is to avoid treating soul-soul communication as the spatial transmission of an audio signal from one agent to another.

The resolution to this problem may not be so difficult to find. We need not think of soul-soul communication as a form of physical correspondence that has transitory velocity and moves through a spatial medium. Instead, such communicability would be direct and non-physical as the intentional juxtaposition of ideas in one's mind. Such mental ideas have no external relations and can be 'picked out' simply by mentally differentiating them individually as 'to my left' and 'to my right' as we often do of distinct images in our minds. Also, persons (each bearing a unique identity) would not need to be differentiated spatially as long as an outsider can still pick out, say, Gabriel from Michael with whom to interact. If I use Dissociative Identity Disorder as an analogy, a patient's psyche may fragment into seemingly independent personalities. It is possible for an outsider to address one personality and not the other *even though the multiple personalities are non-spatially related to each other in the self-same host*. This is only an analogy, but it offers us a possible framework as to how different persons may be differentiated from each other apart from spatiality. Clearly things can be differentiated from each other without having to appeal to the relative locations of the different objects. For example, we can distinguish between the musical notes F-sharp and C-minor. And distinguishing these notes from each other is not a matter of location but of pitch. Therefore, space is not a necessary condition for differentiating similarly composed things from each other.

CI is an exemplification of the alleged phenomenon of *telepathy*, which, given its familiar connotation in the literature, serves as a useful frame of reference. The concept of telepathy must be a graspable concept in order to make sense of what I have been calling CI. Telepathy, whether or not it is a precise way to describe my view, at least offers us an intelligible way of understanding the notion of non-verbal communication that is not based on any physical factors whatsoever. As with descriptions of telepathy, the communication is purely mental and can function in two ways, viz. each soul could be both a transmitter and a receiver of each other's thoughts. For those who believe in demons, such a mechanism is already granted and easily imagined.²⁰

Sceptics about such mechanism will complain that telepathy (of the nonphysical sort mentioned) adds nothing to the explanatory work needed to account for soul-soul communication. Antony Flew, in objecting to the use of telepathy as an explanatory vehicle for occult mediums in séances, complains:

“Telepathy” is not the name of a means of communication;
whereas the mention of radio telephony does explain how certain
results are achieved, by indicating the mechanisms involved.
Telepathy is no more an explanation of the paranormal element in

²⁰ For example, Merrill F. Unger explicitly ‘finds in telepathy a rational basis of corroboration’ of angelic and demonic communicability with embodied persons. Merrill F. Unger, *Biblical Demonology: A Study of Spiritual Forces at Work Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1994), p. 78.

séance performances than memory is an explanation of our capacity to give our names and addresses.²¹

Flew seems to be concerned that ‘telepathy’ is an unenlightening description – a mere label – of the very phenomenon one seeks to explain and so it does not itself serve to add anything to our understanding of the *how*. While the *how* of telepathy is surely unavailable in this reductionist sense, this is not necessarily an objection to it as being an explanation in another sense (perhaps something like what ‘folk psychology’ has been, for better or worse, in the philosophy of mind²²). An advocate of telepathy has (at least) a *meaningful* vehicle for communication even though it may not be a complete *elucidation* of a contiguous, supernatural contraption of some sort reducible to fields and waves (or particles) in motion such as we have in radio telephony. To insist on such would seem to sneak in the imposition that all explanatory mechanisms, whether physical or not, must offer the same level or species of explanation. But there are countless counterexamples to this in comparing, say, *social* mechanisms with electronic mechanisms. The former will lack the causal specifics exhibited in the latter. It is no *less* an explanation even though it lacks the niceties of a reductive physical science. Even physical mechanisms serve to be meaningful though may still be lacking in the *how*. For

²¹ Antony Flew, *A New Approach to Psychical Research* (London: Watts & Co., 1953), p. 69.

²² ‘Folk Psychology’ is a ‘commonsense’ or ‘everyday’ explanation of cognitive processes that is perhaps based on ‘core propositional attitudes, beliefs and desires, alone’. Matthew Radcliffe and Daniel D. Hutto, ‘Introduction’, *Folk Psychology Re-Assessed*, ed. by Matthew Radcliffe and Daniel D. Hutto (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer, 2007), pp. 1-2. Opponents believe that folk psychology is ‘hopelessly primitive’ and that cognition ought to be explained in terms of ‘the framework of a matured neuroscience’. This is because it promises to offer an understanding of *how* such processes transpire. Accordingly, folk psychology is a ‘higher-level explanation’ whereas neuroscience is a ‘lower-level explanation’, and it is highly debatable whether instances of the former are reducible to the latter. Paul Churchland, *Matter and Consciousness: A Contemporary Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind*, 3rd edition (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2013), p. 77.

example, quantum mechanisms like 'quantum tunnelling' (the mysterious ability of a particle to pass through a physical barrier) and 'the observer effect' (that consciousness somehow affects the objects of observation) both refer to interactions between objects that seem to lack the reductionist virtues of radio and telephony. Even worse, Flew's own suggestion that radio and telephony are appropriate levels on which mechanistic explanations ought to reside seems problematic. 'Radio' is just a higher referent for invisible electromagnetic radiation which is to say that 'radio' is not itself irreducible. And is not invisible electromagnetic radiation itself reducible to waves and fields? The need to reduce to the lower levels is only necessary if the current level does not adequately explain the *explananda*. That I stopped at an intersection in my car because I depressed the brake pedal explains sufficiently how I stopped. I do not have to reduce this explanation to the material make-up of the brake pedal and its connected parts in order to make sense of my stopping. Suppose I know *nothing* about how brakes even work. Perhaps braking systems reduce to the operations of 'ectoplasmic radiation'. Nothing about this level of reduction is necessary for explaining how I stopped at the intersection. It is, therefore, no objection to me that I not explain soul-soul commerce in more reductionist terms.

We might now address an additional challenge: if we are to understand souls as having the power to interact in such a way, how come a specific soul cannot interact at will with any other soul? After all, embodied human souls appear not to be able to cognitively interact at will with other embodied human souls. So, what makes a soul's delimited causal transmission so discriminating as to await separation from its body in order to communicate with a fellow soul? A reasonable answer is that it is most likely the case that our paired bodies (if *sui generis*) simply *prevent* such soul-soul interaction. And, once a soul is separated from its body, it may

be free or less encumbered to engage in such commerce. Perhaps it is analogous to the Socratic notion of anamnesis in that being embodied (viz. incarnated) hinders one from recalling past knowledge from a previous state of existence.²³ But there is another reasonable answer, perhaps more so, in that God might prevent such soul-soul communication until the departed are in company with each other. Luke 16 (whether parabolic, apocalyptic, or otherwise) implies that God can indeed impose certain restrictions (in this case proximity) between souls in certain contexts: '[B]etween us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.'²⁴ But this shows *at best* that soul-soul interaction *qua* soul-soul communication is deliberately hampered between *unembodied* souls. What of being embodied? We are told elsewhere that the misbehaviour of living (embodied) men with their (obviously embodied) wives may actually hinder the husbands' prayerful communication to God:

Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered (I Peter 3.7).

The prayers are 'hindered' (*egkoptesthai*), not by God in merely refusing to listen, but by the husband's disrespecting of his wife. According to Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F. Miller, *egkoptesthai* means '*impediment, blockage*' in the same sense as used in I Corinthians

²³ Plato, *Phaedo* 66-67c; id., *Meno* 85d-85c.

²⁴ Luke 16.26. During the correspondence of the rich man and Abraham, Lazarus never participates.

9.12: 'we endure anything rather than put an obstacle [*egkopēn*] in the way of the gospel of Christ.'²⁵ It is probable, then, that a deliberate interruption in soul-soul communication occurs. This, I think, along with Luke 16, offer some general precedent as to how (at least occasionally or circumstantially) souls can be delimited in their interaction (particularly in their communication) with other souls regardless of whether any of those souls is embodied. But there is something to be said about my own awareness that my soul does not directly interact with someone else's (as far as I know!). Perhaps being mutually embodied is among one of the circumstances imposed by God in which my embodied soul's ability to commerce with another embodied soul is cut off. This could be why the Bible contains such strong prohibitions against necromancy.²⁶ It might also explain Paul's statement in II Corinthians 5.6 which states that 'while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord.' Though this is obviously speculation, it is reasonable to posit that the deliberate hampering of soul-soul communication at least bears some type of evidential precedent. And the lack of any first-hand awareness of such communication (viz. participating in telepathy with another embodied human while being embodied myself) is consonant with the entire biblical paradigm of soul-soul commerce.

In this section I have discussed how soul-soul communication is to be understood. I have also addressed a number of potential challenges to the notion that telepathy is an appropriate framework by which to comprehend the mechanism. In the next section, I shall consider whether demons might have another form of interaction, viz. psychokinesis. I do this

²⁵ Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), p. 127.

²⁶ Leviticus 20.27; Deuteronomy 18.10-11; I Chronicles 10.13; Isaiah 8.19.

because in some cases in the Bible, CI appears to not be sufficient to account for all of the activities of the demons. In those cases, psychokinesis serves as a rival hypothesis to CI.

7.5 On Psychokinesis as a Rival to Soul-Soul Interaction

Thus far I have argued for the plausibility that the demons could have a specific kind of causal relation with other immaterial souls. This is at the heart of what I mean by CI. But now we must revisit the conundrum laid out in the introduction to this chapter, viz. that Christians have traditionally supposed that demons (as purely immaterial spirits) can directly interact with the physical world. According to this position, demons are not only capable of cognitive interaction with other souls but they also have a special power that enables them to interact directly with material things like rocks, tables, animals, and human bodies. In Chapter 2, I explained how both the Old and New Testaments seem to report demons causing certain events in nature.²⁷ One such event that is sometimes attributed to demons is the onset of certain kinds of human illness. In Job 2.7, for example, we are told that Satan inflicted Job with skin lesions. If Satan did indeed cause such lesions, it is supposed that those lesions could have only come about by an ability of an immaterial demon to directly interact with Job's biochemistry. And we are told in Luke 13.11 that an unspecified demonic spirit caused a woman to be 'bent double.' It would appear, based on this passage, that demons can apparently cause morphological changes in human beings. Thus, it has become commonplace to imagine that demons can interact with the physical materials of nature and so wreak

²⁷ See Chapter 2, Sections 2.3 and 2.4.

biological havoc. This is all part of the psychokinesis hypothesis whereby a spirit is thought to directly interact with the physical world in this way apart from any mental proxy.

Psychokinetic immaterialism, as I am calling the larger Dominican worldview, holds not only that demons are immaterial but also that they have this psychokinetic power. This is what sets apart the theory I am championing (what I have called *psychodynamic immaterialism*) from this psychokinetic view I am challenging. For I mean to argue that we have no justification for thinking (or needing to think) that demons have such a supplementary ability. My theory, psychodynamic immaterialism, while holding that the demons are indeed immaterial spirits, denies that they have such a psychokinetic ability. Instead, I posit that any activity they are thought to be responsible for is explicable in psychodynamical terms. By this I mean that demons use their mechanism of CI to incline a human soul either to voluntarily perform certain actions with her body or to produce involuntary, psychosomatic effects *on* her body. As I will eventually argue in Chapter 9, neither Job 2 nor Luke 13, *inter alia*, offer us any reason to think that demons can cause such events only psychokinetically. This is to say that the events reported in those respective passages can be easily accounted for by my psychodynamic theory. While I have argued that CI is not only a metaphysical possibility, I have also argued that it enjoys a certain amount of prior probability given that substances should be expected to be able to interact with similar substances. I also pointed out that certain biblical episodes suggest that such interaction involving immaterial souls in general does indeed occur in a variety of contexts. And that given a uniformity of spiritual ontology, it makes it plausible that CI is a basic power had by the demons, which are themselves spirit.

Let us now consider in more detail here what I mean by demons having a *psychokinetic* ability since this has been the longstanding, traditional view amongst Christians regardless of the demons' metaphysical status as immaterial creatures (after all, the early Greek Christians and some Franciscans assert quasi-materialism and yet do not hesitate to imagine that demons have a psychokinetic power). In a more formal codification of this idea, Stephen E. Braude has offered up a more precise definition that he expresses in the following way:

Psychokinesis (PK) = the causal influence of a person (organism) on a physical system *s* without any known sort (or scientifically recognized) physical interaction between the person's (organism's) body and *s*.²⁸

Such a definition seems nearly ideal but leaves open the epistemic possibility that a *physical* mechanism may yet be discovered by which the process of an agent's influence on *s* may eventually be explained in scientific terms. Any real supernatural power manifesting as a psychokinetic ability, particularly when applied to God's interactive ability with nature, will never be known or 'scientifically recognized.' Psychokinesis should be fundamentally incapable of being scientifically recognised since it is a supernatural mechanism. As Braude himself acknowledges, the above definition can only be offered 'in terms of ignorance of the processes

²⁸ Stephen E. Braude, *ESP and Psychokinesis: A Philosophical Examination* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1979), p. 27; Also see id., *The Limits of Influence: Psychokinesis and the Philosophy of Science* (Lanham, NY: Routledge & Kegan Paul Inc., 1986), p. 220.

involved' thereby threatening to make the definition of PK obsolete.²⁹ But for things like angels and demons, PK should never be found out to be scientific or physical for beings that are *ex hypothesi* supernatural and falling outside the purview of science.

Furthermore, I think it is too restrictive to say that such commerce is one that may occur between a person's *body* and *s*. While it gives the uncontroversial impression that PK is possibly independent of conscious awareness (which remains reasonably possible even for demons), it is predicated on the misleading notion of one's having a 'body' (whatever this might mean). For a PK ability that is possessed by someone like God, it should not intrinsically connote having a body. In order to avoid these problems in the present context in talking specifically about (incorporeal) demons, I propose a modification that broadly includes divine and semi-divine beings (which are part of a larger order we can simply categorise as *supernatural beings*). As a concomitant of my purposes here, it is also necessary to drop the use of 'organism' from the definition. Thus, I propose the following, less restrictive definition for the purpose of framing the traditional view of demonic interaction:

(PK*) = the direct causal influence of a person on a physical system *s* apart from any mundane physical (or material) interaction between the person and *s*.

In PK*, there are no ontological commitments being assumed. We just simply want to say that there is a possible means for a person to manipulate a physical system apart from any of the

²⁹ Braude, *ESP and Psychokinesis*, p. 27.

usual physical means (if applicable to those agents). The only metaphysical commitment is that any interaction of the PK* sort will be, frankly, *supernatural*.

So understood, it should be noted that psychokinesis (being defined as PK*) is indeed a better codification of the traditional view of the demons' mechanism for interacting with the physical world. It suggests in a rather straightforward manner that demons, as purely immaterial creatures, can and do interact directly with physical systems. Contrary to PK*, CI does not imply that demons have any direct immaterial interaction with physical systems whatsoever. In fact, CI does not imply *any* direct interaction between a soul and anything that has a different ontology from that soul. In the case of God, his PK*-interaction with nature is due, not to his cognition or his being a spirit, but to his omnipotence. And I will be arguing in Chapter 8 that we have no reason to think demons, who are not omnipotent, utilise PK*. Consequently, I maintain that CI is the *exclusive* power of causal commerce had by demons and that all of their actions must be explained in these terms. Now, I do not mean to say that CI is an exclusive mechanism in a *principled* sense, whereby it is somehow metaphysically impossible for an immaterial demon to have a psychokinetic power. Rather, I mean to say that CI is a *de facto* exclusive mechanism much like how a dedicated CD player might exclusively play CDs and not DVDs even though a CD player could be cleverly engineered to do so. If it should turn out that there are canonical accounts best explained by PK*, PK* should be conjoined with CI. Accordingly, even though CI is not contrary to PK*, *exclusive* CI, as the specified hypothesis of my theory, *is* contrary to PK*. Thus, I find it appropriate to identify my theory as psychodynamic immaterialism which highlights, not only the similarities, but the important differences it has with the traditional views.

It seems to me that CI can be seen as a basic ability at least for unembodied souls. It would not just be a mechanism for God, but for created things like angels and disembodied human souls. I can find no evidence among those who believe in demons to suppose that they would reject the idea that CI is such a basic power for supernatural beings. By contrast, I do not think PK* is basic for created beings, because only God (as an uncreated being of superlative power) naturally and essentially has this ability. I shall argue in the next chapter that there is no reason to suppose that lesser agents like angels, demons, and unembodied human souls have such power apart from God's intervention, and perhaps we may even have evidence to the contrary. As I will point out in the next chapter, God is the one who (at least on occasion) is said to make possible the direct interaction of angels with physical systems. This would be unnecessary if angels already possess such power. And it would strain credulity if we thought that God intervened only because the angels had temporarily lost that power. I shall also argue that no reported phenomena by the demons (viz. the Bible) imply that PK* is necessarily the right mechanism to interpret such phenomena. Therefore, if PK* is to be posited as a viable mechanism for demons, we will require additional evidence to overcome these challenges in order to draw such a conclusion. As we shall see, there is no such evidence. And so CI should be seen, I submit, as the *de facto* exclusive mechanism for any reported interaction demons have with the world.

7.5 Conclusion

It is one thing to establish the immateriality of a certain kind of person – in this case of *demons* – it is by far another thing to establish how they may interact with this world. What

makes this exploration challenging for my theory is the obvious metaphysical notion that their interaction cannot be based on a physical environment or a spatial trajectory indicative of common causal pathways. Spirits on their own just do not operate through space. Due to this challenge, some philosophers (like Jaegwon Kim) object to the metaphysical possibility that unembodied souls can even interact *with each other* much less with any objects substantively distinct from their own kind. I have argued that it is quite coherent to imagine how unembodied souls like demons could interact if and only if such causal contact is had through cognitive interaction with other souls – souls that are of the same kind of substance. I then argued for the prior probability that demons would likely be expected to have this ability given that other souls like God, angels, and disembodied human beings commerce with each other according to a variety of biblical passages. By contrast, I discussed the traditional portrait of the demons' powers that are thought to extend beyond mere CI. According to the traditional view, demons are also capable of directly interacting with distinct material substances like rocks, polar bears, and the body of the Prime Minister of Israel.

If the best explanation of the demons' ontology is that they are purely immaterial spirits, then such a metaphysic should adopt a mechanism that is in conformity with that nature in explaining their ability to interact with this world. In the next chapter, I shall offer a cumulative case for the view that demons do indeed utilise cognitive interaction in commercing with other souls and that they do not likely have any psychokinetic power. As such, we shall see why we may expect that CI is the *de facto* exclusive mechanism had by the purely immaterial demons and that this overall theory is sufficient to account for all of the biblical data.

CHAPTER 8:

THE CASE FOR THE EXCLUSIVITY OF DEMONIC COGNITIVE INTERACTION

8.1 Introduction

I have argued so far that there are no good philosophical grounds for rejecting the logical or metaphysical possibility of persons being purely immaterial. I have also argued that the canonical data give us *prima facie* justification for thinking that Satan and the demons are indeed purely immaterial persons. By contrast, as I have further argued, there are no good reasons to think that the biblical data offers us any justification for doubting their immaterialism. But since, on the traditional view, Satan and the demons do sometimes interact with the world (i.e. they lead people astray and they inflict certain kinds of bodily ailments), I argued that it is coherent to say that such phenomena could be the results of their ability to interact with other souls – whether those other souls are embodied or not. This form of causal interaction – what I have termed *cognitive interaction* (CI) – can adequately account for how demons can interact with beings outside of themselves. In short, what I mean by CI is the view that a basic power of the soul is its ability to communicate via thought to the souls of others. It is conceivable, as I have pressed, that this mechanism can account for how demons bring about changes in people and in their bodies. So my theory has an answer as to how purely immaterial demons can cause these kinds of diverse physical changes. This is the latter component of psychodynamic immaterialism.

One alternative explanation that has widespread support – and one contrary to CI – is the notion that demons possess some kind of magical powers with which to interact with

physical objects (e.g. *psychokinesis*). In this chapter I aim to move beyond the mere coherence of CI and offer a cumulative argument in favour of CI as the exclusive means of demonic interaction. I mean to argue that demons have no ancillary psychokinetic power (PK*) with which to interact with the physical world, and that they therefore do so strictly through CI. In order to make my case, I shall offer up three key pieces of evidence that together confirm the exclusivity of CI (ECI).

8.2 Evidence for the Exclusivity of Demonic Cognitive interaction

I have argued in Chapter 7 that it is coherent to say that Satan and his demons are endowed with a mechanism that allows them to communicate with other minds.¹ This mechanism is a straightforward, ‘natural’ power of an unembodied spirit to commerce with another similar substance regardless of whether that substance is conjoined with another substance (i.e. a material body) or not. We have also explored the possibility that demons might also possess a supernatural PK* power in which to manipulate physical objects and impinge on the sense receptors of human perceivers. And if that is possible, what would be the extent of that power? Might demons have interacted with biological and cosmic things that have ultimately given shape to our physical reality? As Michael Murray asks,

Could these beings [...] have exercised control over which natural laws obtain in our physical cosmos, over the quantity of matter the universe contains, over the speed with which habitable

¹ See Section 9.2.

planets came into being, over the course of natural selection, over the genotype of various physical organisms or genotypic variation over evolutionary history? Could these beings be to blame for the fact that human beings often have bad backs, myopia, liability to cancer and heart disease?²

As Murray implies, there may be no obvious limit as to how far demons may go in manipulating objects within the universe or in the formation of the universe. However, *whether* they would have such power is a question, I think, we can answer. And, as I shall argue below, demons do have the ability to cognitively interact with other souls (whether embodied or not) but they do *not* possess any ancillary power that would enable them to directly manipulate physical laws and objects. In this section, which concerns the second part of my two-part theory of psychodynamic immaterialism, I shall show that the best explanation of demonic activity in this world is exclusively via the mechanism of CI, and I shall do this by considering the following three pieces of evidence:

1. The Bible offers *a posteriori* support for cognitive interaction.
2. How the good angels interact with this world is due to God's causal intervention, not the result of an intrinsic psychokinetic power.

² Michael Murray, *Nature Red in Tooth & Claw* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 103.

3. The prospect of a creative power to generate diseases and perform miracles is without precedent and inappropriately attributes divine powers to demons.

After I address each piece of evidence in turn, I shall offer a cumulative argument based on such evidence that will lead to the conclusion that the mechanism of CI and *only* that mechanism is the best explanation of the demons' intra-worldly powers.

1. The Bible offers a posteriori support for demonic cognitive interaction. In the Bible, there are ample passages indicating that demons cognitively interact with other souls. The occurrences of cognitive (or soul-soul) interaction are variegated. Sometimes the immaterial soul of one cognitively interacts with another immaterial soul. Sometimes the immaterial soul of one cognitively interacts with an embodied soul. Sometimes an embodied soul cognitively interacts with an immaterial soul. And these souls range from human souls (as instances of embodied souls) to angelic souls to God himself (both as instances of unembodied souls). Demons are also in the mix of unembodied souls.

First of all, there are a few explicit occurrences in the Bible where we find an unembodied soul communicating with another unembodied soul. I will mention just three of them: Job 1.7-12, Jude 9, and Revelation 6.9-10. Job 1.7-12 reads:

The LORD said to Satan, "From where have you come?" Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth,

and from walking up and down on it.” And the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?” Then Satan answered the LORD and said, “Does Job fear God for no reason? Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face.” And the LORD said to Satan, “Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand.” So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

Jude 9 reads:

But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, “The Lord rebuke you.”

And Revelation 6.9-10 reads:

When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"

The souls in two of the cases (Job 1.7-12 and Jude 9) explicitly involve Satan (an apropos figure of interest for my purposes here). In Job 1, we have Satan in a direct conversation with God.³ Satan challenges Job's fidelity to God by arguing that that relationship is contingent on the many blessings he receives from God, thus showing Job's faith to be based on his lack of hardship as God's servant. It is Satan's challenge as communicated directly to God that spurs him on to demonstrate Job's faithfulness despite extreme adversity. And, so, we have an episode of an unembodied soul communicating with another unembodied soul. In turning to the New Testament, Jude 9 mentions a 'dispute' over the body of Moses that occurs between Michael the archangel and Satan. The final reprimand issued by Michael – 'the Lord rebuke you!' – is specifically directed to Satan. Again, this is another episode of two unembodied souls in communication. In the remaining account, Revelation 6.9-10, there is a situation noted by its author whose visionary account of heaven depicts the souls of martyred saints ('the souls of those beheaded'⁴) enjoined together in pleading to God for judgement and retribution by

³ I recognise that some commentators find *haśśāṭān* ('the Satan') of Job to be a reference to a good angel acting the role of adversary for the sake of the dialog. Even so, it remains as a case of soul-soul interaction. See Chapter 2, Section 2.3 and Chapter 9, n. 15.

⁴ See Richard Bauckham, 'Revelation', ed. by John Barton and John Muddiman, *Oxford Bible Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 1294. It is possible Revelation 19.4 is also an instance of human souls (viz. the 'twenty-four elders') cognitively communicating with (by singing to) God. Craig Keener says that the

asking, 'O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?'

Let us now turn to examples of communication between an unembodied soul and a soul that is embodied. Examples of this phenomenon abound in the Bible, but I shall consider just two of them here: Nehemiah 2.12 and John 16.13. However, the unembodied participant is sometimes God himself. As such, these passages may not figure as fair illustrations of what a created spirit may normally be capable of. In I Samuel 28.7-20, the deceased Samuel is reported to be conjured up by a sorceress (a 'medium') under the direction of the living Saul. Once Saul makes contact, Samuel communicates directly with him.⁵ It is true that Samuel is not directly identified as an unembodied 'spirit' or 'soul' here, but that he would have been an unembodied spirit or soul is implied by Saul's utilising the services of a 'medium at Endor' (v. 7) who divines 'by a spirit' a way to conjure up the late Samuel (v. 8). According to John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews, and Mark W. Chavalas, Canaanite mediums were commonly understood to be 'conjurers of ancestral spirits who could speak of the future.'⁶ Since Samuel was dead, readers are probably expected, given the backdrop of mediums in the Mesopotamian culture of the time, to suppose that the medium was indeed conjuring a spirit.⁷

'twenty-four elders' are the 'faithful dead [being] portrayed as priests offering worship to God' (*The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), p. 776). But this is disputable in light of its use of angelic typology in Isaiah 24.23 and Daniel 7.9 (cf. Bauckham, 'Revelation', p. 1293).

⁵ Some interpreters, beginning with Tertullian, believe that Samuel is a demonic apparition (see Francesca Aran Murphy, *1 Samuel*, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2010), p. 263). Given that 'Samuel' speaks on behalf of 'the LORD', speaks of events of the past (v. 17) and even of the future (v. 18) with accuracy, and condemns Saul for not going directly to the Lord, it is doubtful that these would be the righteous utterances of a demonic spirit. Even if it were the case that it was a demon, it would not change this as an instance of an unembodied soul in communication with an embodied soul.

⁶ John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews, and Mark W. Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), p. 318.

⁷ Walton, Matthews, and Chavalas also add that the 'spirits who emerged were in human form and generally were able to communicate directly with the client' (ibid.). Verse 14 does offer a physical description of

Now consider a New Testament reference: Matthew 17.1-3:

And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him.

In this passage, the disciples alongside Jesus see and hear the deceased Moses and Elijah.

Verse 10 specifically identifies this as a ‘vision’ and not an apparition; hence, it was likely the product of a direct commerce with the minds of the disciples (likely through the agency of God). If we suppose that CI captures what immaterial persons generally do, and we impose a sort of metaphysical principle of uniformity (specifically, that all immaterial persons of the same type would likely have the same fundamental capabilities), we should then expect that immaterial persons like demons would also be capable of the same.⁸

As it turns out, there are examples taken from episodes involving *demonic* soul-soul interaction (apart from Job 1 and Jude 9) that involve their interaction with embodied human

Samuel’s appearance as an old man wearing a robe and this might suggest a physical manifestation. But this was more likely a visionary representation put into the mind of the medium. This is likely because if it was an extramental physical manifestation, then it would not be the case that only the medium sees the apparition and Saul does not.

⁸ Science adopts a principle of uniformity that pertains to the idea that the regularities and laws of nature that are perceived to exist in the observable universe likely exist everywhere else in the (unobserved) universe. In a correspondence with Sophie Charlotte (cir. 1704), G. W. Leibniz acknowledges this as a metaphysical principle and applies it to his particular metaphysics. And so, in commenting on the ontologies of God, angels, and human souls, he says that ‘[t]he principle of uniformity holds that nature is always the same in its fundamentals, although it makes use of a great variety in its ways [...] among the angels and among the animals as among us, among the dead as among the living’. *Leibniz and the Two Sophies*, tr. and ed. by Lloyd Strickland (Toronto: CRRS, 2011), p. 319. I am indebted to Dr. Strickland for pointing this out to me.

beings. I have in mind I Chronicles 21.1-2, Luke 22.3-4 (paralleled in John 13.2, 27), and Acts 5.3. I Chronicles offers a rather straightforward depiction of King David being inclined by Satan to some action:

Then Satan stood against Israel and incited David to number Israel. So David said to Joab and the commanders of the army, "Go, number Israel, from Beersheba to Dan, and bring me a report, that I may know their number.

It is unclear whether the 'Satan' here is the chief of demons, but if it is then we have an early non-Christian, though canonical, account of Satan internally inciting a human being. In Luke 22.3-4, it is implied that Satan commences with Jesus' betrayer, Judas Iscariot, by having 'entered' (*eisēlthen*) into him in order to precipitate his betrayal of Jesus with the chief priests and officers. Even though this might be more accurately a demonic possession case, I submit that demonic possession (or demonisation) is just a rather aggressive form of soul-soul interaction. For that matter, I should point to *all* of the demonic possession passages for similar support. In Acts 5.3, Luke reports Peter's accusation that Satan has directly 'filled [Ananias's] heart to lie to the Holy Spirit.' This is interesting in connection with an aforementioned passage, Nehemiah 2.12, where it is God's natural privilege to direct one's 'heart' one way or another. Acts 5.3 would thus suggest that this mechanism of interaction is available also to Satan. I Thessalonians 3.5 reads, 'For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be

in vain.’ It seems to imply that Satan (or a demon), if he is the ‘tempter’ envisioned here, can directly lure people away from faith.⁹ II Timothy 2.26 (‘and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will’) likewise implies Satanic CI whereby living saints can have their wills ensnared by the Devil.

The results are quite telling. First, we have cognitive interaction explicitly occurring between unembodied souls. This alone suggests that there may be a ‘natural’ power available to such souls. Secondly, we have CI explicitly occurring between demons (or, at least, Satan) and both embodied and unembodied souls. I do not think we need to speculate as to whether souls throughout the Bible *can* interact with others and so demons, too; rather, we have explicit mention of Satan participating in the phenomenon in question. As long as one is willing to grant that Satan is a typical representative of what demons can do, the conclusion here strongly indicates that cognitive interaction is not only feasible for demons, but actual. And this conclusion is further bolstered by the fact that the demonic possession cases of the New Testament supply interaction between demons other than Satan and human beings.

Now, one may wonder, do not the angels implement apparitions and other manifestations for human percipients? Do they not interact with human beings in overtly physical ways? And if the angels do, and the demons derive from the angels, should we not expect that demons, too, would have such power? This takes us to the next piece of evidence under consideration: the fact that the good angels themselves likely lack such an ability.

⁹ This point is perhaps underscored by those passages already discussed in Chapter 6, namely Genesis 3.1-6 and Matthew 4.1-11, where Satan may be tempting Eve and Jesus, respectively, in his unembodied state.

2. *How the good angels interact with this world is due to God's causal intervention, not the result of an intrinsic psychokinetic power.* It is commonplace to see the good angels as the archetypes for how one is to understand demons. As I noted in Chapter 1, I do think this is a mistake since we cannot guarantee that God is not resourcing the angels with certain temporary provisions with which to carry out their various intra-worldly tasks.¹⁰ And this impediment is in addition to our already limited ability to draw conclusions about the angelic nature. As David Keck explains:

Because it is impossible to see an angel in its natural condition or to observe an angel's cognitive processes at work, the theologian can learn of the nature of the angels either from revelation or from the use of philosophical concepts and principles and analytical or discursive reasoning. Scripture [...] does not examine the nature of the angels in any detail.¹¹

Yet we are not left to merely speculate about whether God leaves the angel to manifest in the world itself or whether God intervenes to manifest the angel himself, since the Bible has a number of passages that explicitly credit God for such manifestations. For one, the account of Balaam's riding of his donkey and being blocked by an angelic presence in Numbers 22.26-31 explicitly informs readers that God is indeed the means by which angels are even made visible to percipients:

¹⁰ See Chapter 1, Section 1.1.

¹¹ David Keck, *Angels and Angelology in the Middle Ages* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 75.

[...] the angel of the LORD went further, and stood in a narrow place where there was no way to turn to the right hand or the left. When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she lay down under Balaam; so Balaam was angry and struck the donkey with his stick. And the LORD opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?" Then Balaam said to the donkey, "Because you have made a mockery of me! If there had been a sword in my hand, I would have killed you by now." And the donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your donkey on which you have ridden all your life to this day? Have I ever been accustomed to do so to you?" And he said, "No." *Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way with his drawn sword in his hand; and he bowed all the way to the ground.*¹²

The author of this account surely credits the Lord as the sole cause of Balaam's seeing of the angelic presence impeding his journey.¹³ The author of Revelation gives the following account

¹² Emphasis mine. Many Old Testament scholars challenge this story as merely incorporating the device of fable as seen in Egyptian and Assyrian writings around the same time. Given the obvious linguistic ties to the phrase 'the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam' of verse 31 as it mirrors verse 28's 'the LORD opened the mouth of the donkey' – where the latter referent surely is part of the genre of fable – one might conclude that the account is anything but historical. I am not interested in entering into that dispute here, but suffice it to say that our concern is merely with the well-established fact that the account credits God as the sole and singular cause of both the donkey's speech and the angelic manifestation. This is enough to support my present concern.

to his readers regarding a specific occasion where four apocalyptic angels of judgement are instructed by a fifth angel to inflict global disaster:

Then I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun,
with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to
the four *angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea*,
saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we
have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads."¹⁴

Observable activities of the angels – in this case their interaction with the material world – are also caused by God as the occasion demands. Since angels are consistently declared to be dispatched and resourced by God,¹⁵ few conclusions can be drawn about what angels can do on their own.

¹³ Another biblical account seems to offer up a similar example of God's making visible some aggregate of invisible beings:

When the servant of the man of God rose early in the morning and went out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was all around the city. And the servant said, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" He said, "Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." Then Elisha prayed and said, "O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see." So the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha (II Kings 6.15-17).

It is unclear whether the 'horses and chariots' that Elisha requested to be made visible are in any way angelic manifestations, but nonetheless the account serves to independently confirm an additional *explicit* reference to God's making some person see what is otherwise imperceptible. Most biblical apparition stories of one sort or another lack any such qualifier.

¹⁴ Revelation 7.2-3; emphasis mine. Blount writes of this episode that the angelic power 'was not something the angels acquired on their own; it was given (*edothē*) to them by God'. Brian K. Blount, *Revelation* (Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Publishing, 2009), p. 141.

¹⁵ See Psalm 91.11 (cf. Matthew 4.6; Luke 4.10); Matthew 13.41; 24.30-31; 26.53; II Thessalonians 1.7; I Timothy 5.21; Hebrews 1.7; I Peter 3.21-22; Revelation 16.1.

Additionally, how the angelic community *communicates* to human intelligences (whether through a mere visionary encounter¹⁶ or a direct, corporeal visitation¹⁷) will also fall under the same difficulty (after all, as was pointed out in the previous piece of evidence, it is the case that the Bible often reports angel-human interaction). We are also told in Numbers 22 that the same Lord who ‘opened the eyes of Balaam’ to see the angel also ‘opened the mouth of the donkey’ (v. 28) to speak. It seems to me that God has causally but temporarily manifested the angelic beings on their behalf – as the present cases suggest – so that they should be visible to and interactive with residents of this world. This would mean that any angelic manifestations in (and angelic interactions with) the physical world are divinely resourced, presumably in order that they may carry out their ministerial functions.

Thus, if angels must rely on God’s power for manifesting, then this implies that they lack any such intrinsic power of their own. What is now evidently true of the angels – that they owe their manifestability to God’s direct interaction and not to some power intrinsic to their nature – is *a fortiori* true of the demons. It would be an awkward leg to stand on to affirm that demons are intrinsically endowed with PK* but the angels are devoid of such power. It is simpler to affirm that demons, as with the angels, have no ability to manifest on their own.

But, in general, there is something inappropriate about demons having the potential to effect cosmological and biological changes in the course of human history, namely, its approximation to divine power. We know that God effects grand changes in the universe;

¹⁶ Some clear examples of visionary encounters with angels are reported in Luke 24.23 and Acts 10.3. I discussed both visionary encounters and corporeal visitations in my third evidence for pure immaterialism in Chapter 5, Section 5.2.

¹⁷ Some clear examples of corporeal visitations of angels appear in Genesis 19.1-3 and Hebrews 13.2.

would not attributing to demons similar powers seem like an encroachment upon the divine prerogatives? This leads us to the next piece of evidence under consideration.

3. The prospect of a creative power to generate diseases and perform miracles is without precedent and inappropriately attributes divine powers to demons. There is one thing that all scholars of demonology operating within the Christian tradition will affirm, namely, that one should avoid taking properties that belong solely to God and applying them to God's archenemies, the demons. This may have been one of the motivating reasons for Augustine's post-conversion resistance to Manichaeism.¹⁸ By supposing that demons can generate or stimulate diseases in people, or manufacture bodies (or body parts), it implies their ability to interact with the physical world. But it also seems to tread dangerously on creative prerogatives that are thought to be exclusive to God. In order to generate anything from a tumour to a hominid, it would appear that the demon would not only possess a PK* gift that enables them to interact with matter but a gift capable of *creating newly functioning* things that not even embodied persons can accomplish. Demons would not just be manipulating raw materials, but they would be (instantaneously?) converting raw material into flourishing organisms (i.e. viruses, bacteria, and parasites) or into full-blown organic hominids (i.e. tangible apparitions). In short, if such putative phenomena are legitimate occurrences in nature, it would appear that demons can act as supernatural creators. This would seem to contravene King David's declaration: 'There is none like you among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any

¹⁸ According to Inta Ivanovska, Augustine himself, while in Cassiciacum, 'tried to "demythologize" what might be considered the miraculous aspects of demonic activity in order to safeguard against their claim to divine power and divine knowledge'. 'The Demonology of St. Augustine of Hippo' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, St. Louis University, 2011), p. 64.

works like yours' (Psalm 86.8). And despite much of the past consisting of these putative creations by demons, Paul assures the Colossians that 'by [God through Jesus] all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things were created through him and for him' (Colossians 1.16). Though God himself is supposed to be, according to orthodoxy, the ultimate creator (either directly or indirectly) of every concrete thing,¹⁹ traditionalists in demonology may quickly blunt this concern by emphasising that God is a creator *ex nihilo* ('out of nothing') whereas demons are merely *craftsmen* with sufficient power to manipulate pre-existing matter and energy, viz. creators *ex materia* ('out of [pre-existing] material').²⁰ Thomas Aquinas explains that

by [the demons'] natural power they can produce as art produces things, those effects only that result from the natural forces contained in bodies, which obey them in respect of local movement; and thus they can employ them in producing an effect in a very short time. Now by means of these powers it is possible for bodies to undergo real transformation: inasmuch as in the natural course one thing is generated from another. [...]

Accordingly demons can work wonders in us in two ways first by means of real bodily transformation: secondly by disturbing the

¹⁹ Jeremiah 10.10-11; I Corinthians 8.5-6.

²⁰ For a thorough discussion as to the distinction between these two kinds of creators (as well as a philosophical defence of God as one who creates *ex nihilo*), see William Lane Craig and Paul Copan, *Creation out of Nothing: A Biblical, Philosophical, and Scientific Exploration* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004) ; idem, 'Craftsman or Creator?', *The New Mormon Challenge*, ed. by Francis J. Beckwith, Carl Mosser, and Paul Owen (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), pp. 95-152.

imagination so as to delude the senses. But neither of these works is miraculous but is like the work of a craftsman.²¹

How much different a disease in the body or an apparition in the air? Could these not be the results of a craftsman of the kind envisioned?

While I agree that demons would not, on the traditional view, be creators *ex nihilo*, there would be something yet unsettling about the demons' supposed ability to engage in 'real bodily transformation' if they could craft fully functioning organisms like diseases or talking serpents. Traditionalists within demonology posit specific abilities of Satan according to passages like Exodus 7 where Satan is thought to empower Pharaoh's high priests to cause the turning of staffs into snakes, the generating of frogs upon the land, and the converting of rivers into blood. These would not only be extraordinary acts of abiogenesis, they would be extravagant acts (at least in some cases) of *fully realised* organisms (and do frogs have souls?). And if poor Job (Job 2.7) were stricken with leprosy (a condition brought on by the introduction of a specific bacterium), any dermatological symptoms would have to have been accelerated beyond normal physical mechanisms.²² But even more troubling is the changing of a staff into a snake and the saturation of the Nile with blood, both which would involve a miraculous transformation of inorganic matter to organic, cellular material (provided that such events are not acts of mere trickery). And if these feats are achievable, one wonders why Satan could not

²¹ Thomas Aquinas, *De Potentia Dei* VI. 5, *On the Power of God*, ed. by Lawrence Shapcote (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1933), p. 185.

²² Leprosy has 'a long incubation period (2-11 years)' (D. N. J. Lockwood and A. J. C. Reid, 'The Diagnosis of Leprosy is Delayed in the United Kingdom', *QJM: An International Journal of Medicine*, 94 (2001), p. 207). While it is not impossible to suppose that Job had a two-year break before any skin eruptions obtained, it contravenes the immediate succession of Satan's departure from his conversation with God to the visible manifestation of the skin lesions which obtain as if the events occur seamlessly one after another (cf. Job 2.7).

resurrect a body or create human life altogether. At the very least, Satan *could* do these things even if he were forbidden by God from doing so. And such an ability would appear to be virtually indistinguishable from the heresy of Manichaeism. Thus the proponent of demonic craftsmanship is saddled with the burden of explaining why God would have empowered demons with or has permitted them the ability to perform such extraordinary PK* feats if the powers are essentially indistinguishable from divine miracles (that is, distinguished apart from the motives of the miracle-working agent). As Aquinas himself cautions, 'if the demons whose whole will is diverted to evil, were to receive the power to work miracles, God would vouch for their falsehood, which is repugnant to his goodness.'²³

Those who insist that Satan can indeed be a miracle-worker could point out that the demons likely acquired their creative powers when they themselves were created as good angels. This perhaps would exonerate God as being a willing accomplice. Though their abuses were foreknown, God could have had morally sufficient reasons for permitting such power to remain in them. Such proponents could rightly point out that any subsequent abuse of such power by the demons is no different than their post-fallen abuse of CI (lest, by *tu quoque*, God would be an accomplice to temptations and demonic possessions by having endowed the demons with the capability to cognitively interact with humans).

Nevertheless, there are two additional considerations that further complicate this explanation and make it less than satisfying. Firstly, recall my previous discussion in the second piece of evidence about angelic power when it comes to interacting with the world and its percipients. To summarise the point, when angels interact physically with this world, we are

²³ Aquinas, *ibid.*

informed that such activity is at the immediate agency of God himself and not due to some intrinsic PK* power imbued into their nature (cf. Numbers 22.31; II Kings 6.15-17; Revelation 7.2). If angels do not perform simple tasks such as appearing to percipients on their own but depend on the power of God for such manifestation, it would be *ad hoc* to suppose that angels actually have the power to do this themselves yet do not use it, and allow God to perform the apparition instead. But this is peculiar indeed, and starts to sound a little more like a conspiracy theory. Why not just think that we are mistaken about how much power the angels have and that God, as seems demonstrably the case, is the only one who manifests created spirits to percipients? If the *angel* must rely on God's creative power, this obliterates any expectations that the demons could do it on their own. So, if we should resist assigning to angels powers they likely do not have, as I think we should, then we have all the more reason to avoid doing the same of the demons.

Now, with that said, I do think it remains metaphysically possible that God could have given demons a PK* power of some sort. The point here is only to acknowledge that the denial of demonic PK* is not one of certainty, even after a consideration of all of the arguments I have offered against it. But it seems that the supporter of demonic PK* can only say that demons just have it inexplicably. Yet given the *de facto* evidence that only God acts in this way, and that God would not be an accomplice to their physical shenanigans, it seems more likely that their PK* ability to interact with matter to the extent of creating fully functioning diseases and animals at will is the preserve of God. Thus, the probability that demons should be expected to have this kind of PK* power – one that implies magical powers – is low.

In the next section, I shall tie all of the evidences together into a cumulative case against demonic PK*.

8.3 Assessment of the Evidence

The preceding section contains three pieces of evidence that, I argue, show that the demons have the ability to cognitively interact with other souls whether those souls be embodied or not. I also argued that it is significant that even the angels, from whence come the demons, rely on God's intervention in order to perform their interactions with the physical world. I then argued from the fact that God alone is creator that to attribute a PK* power to demons treads dangerously on that divine prerogative. I shall now build on these evidences to discuss how the theory of demonic PK* does not possess certain explanatory virtues. This will ultimately lead to my cumulative case for why I think that CI is the only mechanism the demons likely have to interact with the physical world.

8.3.1 Occam's Razor eliminates the addition of an inherent psychokinetic power in demons.

My assessment of the canonical data, among other points, reveals that there is no explanatory need thus far to attribute to a created spirit *simpliciter* a PK* ability.²⁴ But if spirits in general were to engage in behaviour thought impossible for immaterial spirits unless aided by God, we should just think that God has made it possible for such behaviour and not that such a spirit possesses that gifted ability itself. If one already acknowledges that God exists in

²⁴ We have yet to explore whether there may still be passages unaddressed that betray a PK* power in the case of demons in particular, and this I will do in the next chapter. For now, I submit that no passages imply such a power.

the way classical theism portrays, it is *easier* to attribute such extraordinary behaviour to the hand of God. To illustrate this point, consider how the Bible occasionally affirms that human beings are capable of certain extraordinary feats like miracles.²⁵ If we were unaware of any specific passages that stipulated that ‘there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone’ (I Corinthians 12.6), I suspect that we would draw a similar conclusion nonetheless. Why? Because I highly doubt that one might conclude – even if the Bible did not explicitly say that God is the source of all demonstrations of supernatural power – that healing powers, miracles, and such were actually the standalone result of the intrinsic powers of first-century human beings themselves. We would naturally opt for such acts to be the products of the agency of God because of who he is. And positing special, unique powers intrinsic to humanity during, but only during, this time would be exceedingly unnecessary. Thus Occam’s Razor shaves off, so to speak, the unnecessary hypothesis that a finite creature can perform an action that is impossible for it given the nature it has. Even today, given the relevant theological backdrop of a believer in today’s world, one might be quicker to affirm some supernatural occurrence as an act of *God’s* doing rather than as the result of a special, this-worldly PK* force. If a deceased man suddenly burst from his grave and began singing, we would not think that this person was particularly gifted with a PK* power to cause such a self-animated revivification. We would more likely think God had performed that miracle before our eyes (and ears). And when we consider how disembodied human persons are reported in the Bible to appear and interact with living persons,²⁶ I submit that we would be

²⁵ I.e. Mark 16.17-18; Acts 2.1-4; 3.1-10; 5.16; 8.7; 28.8-9; James 5.16;

²⁶ I.e. I Samuel 28.11-19; Matthew 17.3-8.

inclined to think that God is responsible for such intra-worldly activity and that disembodied persons are not specially endowed with the power to make themselves manifest.

It is true that reports of hauntings and poltergeists throughout history have left people imagining that immaterial spirits have some sort of intrinsic PK* ability to affect the senses of others and to move physical objects (as well as make sounds and manipulate environmental conditions) apart from divine intervention – particularly if those spirits are thought to be demons. But interpreters of such manifestations, if they genuinely occur at all, may just be guilty of wild speculation similar to interpreters of *biblical* demonology.²⁷ Such counterexamples uncritically assume that the data are, at the outset, unquestionably real. Even so, such occurrences would only mean that believers in hauntings would need to reconsider their *interpretation* of such things (perhaps as naturally induced hallucinations or divine acts of God) and not the occurrences of the haunting experiences themselves.²⁸ If our natural disposition is to attribute all acts of extraordinary ability to God and that, additionally, we were to lack any data (whether dubious or real) that cannot already be accounted for by the uncontested use of some other already-granted power, then why should we posit any sort of extraneous PK* ability? This cannot be seen as anything but an *ad hoc* manoeuvre. We just lack sufficient data that would require us to have to look beyond CI for answers. Thus the simpler view is that demons have only the ability to cognitively interact with others.

Tied to this cautious approach to how much we are entitled to assign certain powers to demons, it is equally important that we do not exaggerate any power they *are* explicitly said to

²⁷ Uncritically pushing for a special power in order to account for putative demonological behaviour strikes me as something of a *deus ex machina* plot device often found in ancient Greek tragedy plays. Nobody wants to say that it *cannot* happen, but it is explanatorily *ad hoc* to suppose that it *did* happen.

²⁸ I dealt with this point at length in a slightly different context in Chapter 6, Section 6.2, Objection #2.

have. If the Bible declares that they have any kind of power, it is important to exercise caution in how we understand that power. We should not assign any level of power beyond what is strictly warranted by proper exegesis of the passage(s) in question. To this we now turn.

8.3.2 The power of Satan and his demons should not be assumed to be greater than what the canonical evidence warrants.

While I have been arguing for delimiting the powers that demons and their chief have, the New Testament does appear to attribute to Satan and his demons a certain amount of undisclosed superhuman power. This is to say that demons are not described in the same way as disembodied saints, which can do nothing special or unique. Instead, demons are described as being virtual superpowers that can do things beyond the normal abilities of other creatures. The Bible even explicitly refers to demons as ‘cosmic powers’ (Ephesians 6.12). Angels in general are said to be ‘greater in might and power’ over human beings (II Peter 2.11). Satan himself has ‘all power’ (II Thessalonians 2.9) to the extent that the ‘whole world lies in the power of the evil one’ which includes ‘the power of the air’ (Ephesians 2.2) and even the ‘power over death’ (Hebrews 2.14). There is little doubt that ‘power’ (when translated from *dunamis*) refers to *force* and *deed* and not to mere *authority* (as in having the ‘power’ or ‘right’ to marry or to adjudicate – something that is better captured by the use of *exousia* as we see in John 1.12). Are we not obliged to see these as indicative of demonic PK*?

I would answer ‘no’ to such a question. It seems to me that one need not exaggerate the sort of power had by Satan and the demons in order to consider them *operationally* superior to human beings, because even if one grants them CI alone, the exercise of this power

could give rise to significant consequences. By analogy, consider how the New Testament speaks of human beings as doing 'greater works' than Jesus Christ himself (John 14.12). This is not meant to suggest that the works of believers will be more miraculous or extravagant than Jesus' own ministerial works (i.e. the resuscitation of corpses or healings from diseases). Rather, the context suggests that the 'greater works' refers to the evangelistic means to reach more individuals globally and to the ability to bring, in terms of sheer quantity, more people into the fellowship of God.²⁹ If the powers of Satan and the demons refer to their *level of influence* then there is no reason, as with the 'works' of John 14.12, to suppose that the *dunamis* is a miraculous or supernatural PK* power.³⁰ The term *dunamis* itself need not entail a supernatural connotation since it generically refers 'to the inherent or derived ability to perform an action.'³¹ That Satan has the ability to perform acts of chicanery (II Thessalonians 2.9) or that angels have undisclosed abilities beyond human beings (II Peter 2.11) is no direct challenge to my suggestion that CI is their exclusive means of interacting with the world. That demons can successfully disseminate a wide range of deceitful doctrines,³² and temptations,³³ makes their power, in this cognitive sense, far more dangerous than any PK* ability, for it commands *the free will* of victims which is the pinnacle of control. This is, after all, how we make sense of clichés like 'the pen is mightier than the sword.' It is a far more terrible power that one could make another *want* to be evil.

²⁹ See *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. by Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), p. 453.

³⁰ As it turns out, *dunamis* is only used of Satan and angels in II Thessalonians 2.9 and II Peter 2.11, respectively.

³¹ Clinton E. Arnold, 'Power', *Dictionary of the Later New Testament*, ed. by Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), p. 938. *Dunamis* surely has no supernatural connotation when used in places like I Corinthians 15.56 where Paul writes, '[...] the power of sin is the law.'

³² I Thessalonians 4.1; I John 4.1.

³³ Matthew 4.3; 6.13; I Corinthians 7.5; I Thessalonians 3.5.

We can also infer from the Johannine report of Satan and his demons losing a battle against Michael and the good angels that the demons' power is not as strong as that of the good angels.³⁴ The other terms used to describe the 'power' of Satan (*exousia* and *kratos*) refer to one's merely having *authority* or *jurisdiction*. The reference to Satan having the 'power (*kratos*) of death' does not mean, according to the noted commentator William L. Lane, that the devil 'possess[es] control over death inherently' but that he 'gained his power when he seduced humankind to rebel against God.'³⁵ It is, as Hebrews 2 continues, 'those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery' (v. 15). Thus, it is the bludgeon of the *fear* of death that Satan wields in his terrorising control (viz. 'power') over mankind. Again, no PK* ability is implied for it does not suggest that Satan has a direct causal power over another's body to directly end life.

Therefore, the powers of Satan and his demons to influence doctrine and human behaviour are best seen as reflections of their widespread ability to cognitively interact with other minds. This is perfectly in keeping with the scriptural assertion that angels and demons possess a power beyond human ability, and so there is no reason to hypothesise that Satan and/or his angels possess any PK* abilities. This now leads to our final consideration of another explanatory virtue, namely what one can expect when examining the canonical data. If my hypothesis is true, the raw data found in the Bible are as one would expect.

³⁴ Revelation 12.7-8.

³⁵ William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, WBC 47b (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1991), p. 61; *idem*, *Hebrews: A Call to Commitment* (Vancouver, BC: Regent College Publishing, 2004), p. 50.

8.3.3 The canonical data are what we should expect to find if cognitive interaction is the exclusive mechanism demons utilise for activity in the world.

C. S. Peirce suggested that what makes a preferred explanation for some specific, relevant evidence is the fact that if the hypothesis were true, we would not be surprised to find such evidence than we would otherwise be without it.³⁶ As part of a greater dialectic for psychodynamic immaterialism, the canon we have (viz. the specific evidence of the biblical record regarding Satan and the demons and also of the good angels) is exactly what we would expect to find if demons had the ability to cognitively interact with other souls (embodied or not) and *lack* a PK* power. That Satan and the demons are consistently said to interact cognitively, that any physiological disturbances in victims of maladies are consonant with psychologically-based aetiologies, and that demons never interact with this world except through living human proxies, all strike me as the kinds of data one would expect if CI is the exclusive means through which demons commerce with the world. But if Satan and the demons were to have a PK* power, then the hypothesis would be most conducive to any facts that entailed that Satan and the demons frequently manifest themselves, form multiple organisms, and bring about various physical disturbances (viz. the kinds of events that would be inexplicable by appeal to CI). The apparitions and corporeal visitations of humans, angels, and God are sometimes described even if symbolically (e.g. I Samuel 28.14, Ezekiel 10.8-14, and 43.2, respectively). But I submit that no such descriptions, symbolic or otherwise, appear in reference to Satan or any other demon. We might even expect to find certain common expressions used to refer to audible expressions of Satan and the demons as we do with God,

³⁶ C. S. Peirce, *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, ed. by Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (MA: Harvard University Press, 1935), V. 189.

angels, and human beings (i.e. 'hear the voice of', 'he spoke unto them', and 'the sound of'). Yet none exists. In order to save the PK* theory from the awkwardness of such silence, one must insist that the demons have either been largely restrained by God from manifesting or have chosen to restrain themselves. Traditional who believe in demons are likely to recall that God has so restrained their causal activity and that this fact would account for the scant occurrences of intra-worldly activity apart from CI. In the Bible, God explicitly delimits the activity of Satan as seen in Job 1.10, 2.6, Matthew 12.27-29 (Mark 3.26-27), Mark 1.34, and Revelation 20.2 despite his penchant for predatory behaviour.³⁷ If there were even just a few references to scenarios that were best defined as acts of PK* manipulation, then I suppose this added hypothesis of demonic PK* would make sense. However, I say, it is not that we have just a *few* references best explained by appeal to a PK* power, it is that we have *no references whatsoever* to which to make such an appeal.

Could my contention just be an argument from silence (viz. an appeal to an absence of evidence)? In other words, am I merely making my case based on the idea that there is a lack of evidence for any of the alleged manifestations attributed to Satan and the demons? While it is true that I cannot say that demons do not have a PK* power *simply because* we lack the specific scriptural facts noted above if they did, it is but one part of the larger case against demonic PK* that I am offering. Otherwise, what is to prevent us from positing *any* power that demons might have only to complain that any lack of specific evidence of certain phenomena hardly counts as a refutation? Suppose that we allege that demons can burn down houses, freeze lakes, manufacture land masses, form galaxies, or fashion new universes. It seems

³⁷ | Peter 5.8.

reasonable to suppose that there would be reports of some demons being responsible for burned houses, frozen lakes, etc., on which to help support such powers. If we were to not take the silence of the Bible seriously wherein these reports do not exist, that the Bible were to be silent on such matters would be strangely unimportant.³⁸ It seems reasonable that in order to have warrant for supposing that demons have any kind of power, we should always have positive reasons to do so. And since there appears to be no such reason to do so, with an absence of particular evidence as added confirmation of that, then there is no reason to stipulate an *ad hoc* supposition that demons do have a PK* power but are, say, are being restricted by God or by their own wills from actually using it. That they simply do not have such abilities is much simpler to affirm. And that the Bible lacks any reports of any extramental manifestations of the sorts mentioned because demons cannot do so seems a more natural conclusion. Thus, that one might expect there to be some biblical reports of manifestations if demons have a PK* ability suggests that any absence of such evidence makes the hypothesis less probable. Therefore, the claim that CI is the exclusive vehicle of demonic commerce with this world is more in keeping with the content of the scriptural canon.

8.3.4 The best explanation of the evidence is that demons act in this world only via cognitive interaction with human beings.

³⁸ Yonatan Fishman also explains that 'it is possible to devise ad hoc explanations for the absence of evidence or the disconfirming of the supernatural that would render supernatural claims immune to falsification. However, if such a strategy is permissible, then mundane claims involving natural phenomena are not falsifiable either, as one can always invent an ad hoc hypothesis to explain away any observation or the outcome of any experimental test' ('Can Science Test Supernatural Worldviews?', *Science, Worldviews and Education*, ed. by Michael R. Matthews (Sydney, Australia: Springer Science and Business Media, 2009), p. 178).

I have argued for a series of claims that either support the occurrence of demonic CI or show the weakness of the case for the rival theory that demons have PK*. I furthered my argument by then discussing such evidences against the backdrop of certain explanatory virtues that help confirm explanations. Cumulatively, the evidences lead me to conclude that CI is likely the only vehicle by which demons interact with this world. It is my intent in this section, then, to consolidate all of these claims and arguments into a summary of my case. Once the arguments and evidences are taken together, I believe the overall probability of the exclusivity of CI is greatly increased, and as such CI serves as the best metaphysical explanation of the demons' activity in the world.

Let us begin with Chapter 7 on the metaphysical possibility of CI. I argued that it is coherent to postulate that demons can act on other souls (viz. soul-soul interaction) whether those souls be embodied or not. But this, of course, is not enough to determine *whether* they do or whether this is their *only* ability for intra-worldly activity. Thus, I proceeded in this chapter to defend specific evidences for the fact and exclusivity of CI. These evidences include the following: (i) that the Bible offers *a posteriori* support for CI; (ii) that the good angels' (from whence the demons derive) apparent creative powers are likely a result of God's direct intervention, not as the result of a PK* power inherent to them; and (iii) that the prospect of a creative power to generate diseases and perform miracles is without precedent and inappropriately attributes divine powers to demons. I then argued, in contrast to whether or not demons also have a PK* ability, that exclusive CI accords better with certain explanatory virtues, namely, that Occam's Razor eliminates the addition of an inherent PK* power in demons, that the power of Satan and his demons should not be assumed to be greater than

what the canon warrants, and that the canonical texts are what we should expect to find if CI is the exclusive mechanism demons utilise for their activity in the world. As such, ECI serves as the simpler explanation and accords better with our expectations of the evidence.

8.4 Conclusion

I conclude that the probability of the demons utilising CI as the exclusive means by which they interact with the world is greater than the probability that they should also utilise an ancillary, PK* ability. As such, I have only offered a dialectical argument based on some of the salient virtues of good explanatory reasoning and inductive inference. Thus, anyone who cedes the view that demons are purely immaterial spirits should affirm that they act in this world only through their cognitive interactions with human beings. This is not to say that my arguments are unimpeachable or that this is the last word on the subject. In fact, in the next chapter, I shall explore some potential and actual objections to my conclusion that would serve to lower the probability of my conclusion. I shall address some potential philosophical objections that may be raised against ECI and then I shall consider some actual theological objections against my contention that demons likely have no PK* ability. In the end, as I will show, none of those objections is sufficient to lower the probability of ECI after all.

CHAPTER 9

OBJECTIONS TO THE EXCLUSIVITY OF DEMONIC COGNITIVE INTERACTION

9.1 Introduction

If demons are purely immaterial spirits, as I have argued, then we need to explain how such beings may interact with this material world. Two theories stand in contention with one another. One theory, the one espoused by the traditional view, is that demons have a psychokinetic ability (or PK* for short) with which to directly (though mysteriously) interact with material objects. The other theory, the one I have been championing, is that demons lack any such psychokinetic ability and act in this world only through the agency of their cognitively interacting with human hosts (or ECI for short). I offered my arguments in the last chapter for thinking that ECI is the better explanation for understanding how demons interact with this world. However, as with the notion of pure immaterialism, my arguments are bound to be met with some opposition. In fact, the opposition to ECI is undoubtedly going to be more fierce since belief in demonic PK* is very popular amongst Christian philosophers (whether materialist, quasi-materialist, or pure immaterialist). Given this, it is necessary to consider objections (whether anticipatory or real) to the theory I have defended. As with the objections to pure immaterialism, these objections may also be partitioned into two categories: philosophical and theological. I shall argue that neither category of objections offers us any reasons to doubt ECI. To these categories of objections we shall now turn.

9.2 Philosophical Objections

In this section we shall consider a number of philosophical objections to ECI. I shall assume, for simplicity's sake, that an objection to ECI constitutes grounds for supporting PK*.

Objection #1: When dealing with supernatural beings, which lie beyond our experience, it is impossible to ascertain either the extent of their powers, or the limits thereof.

Some may think that there is something that smacks of presumptuousness when a finite, temporal, spatially-restricted human being proceeds to say what a race of super-beings can or cannot do. And if it is presumptuous to limit the powers of super-beings, then we are in no position to say that demons do not have any PK* ability. In reply, I do think that this is a misplaced concern, and a concern that ultimately misunderstands the programme I am defending. First of all, we do impose boundaries and restrictions on the supernatural in a variety of other contexts. For example, some classical theists are content to say that the omnipotence of God in some way excludes being able to lie, steal, or murder even though these are mundane acts that can be performed by finite human persons.¹ They correctly support such an exclusion on the basis that God not only possesses maximal power but also maximal virtue. And to suppose that God is able to perform acts of vice fails to take into consideration that such acts are prevented by God's maximal virtue. This means that either God is incapable of such acts due to his moral nature or that he is prevented from such acts because he always wills not to do them. Either way, God never performs vices because they are either prevented by his nature or his will. Angels are thought not to be omniscient or omnipresent since these are attributes exclusive to God. Hence, angels are prevented from being omniscient and

¹ See, for example, Jerome Gellman, 'Omnipotence and Impeccability', *The New Scholasticism*, 51 (1977), pp. 21-37.

omnipresent. Demons are thought to be unable to fully demonise individuals who have freely acquired the salvation of God since two mutually exclusive ultramundane beings cannot simultaneously rule over their physical hosts.² The point is not how good these reasons are for thinking that such beings have limitations, rather it is the fact that a number of philosophers do not think it presumptuous to conclude that some supernatural entities have limitations. Therefore, the problem is not in whether there exist any principled objections to the notion of supernatural beings having limitations, but in whether there are any reasons to suggest that there are any such limitations. And I have advanced some reasons to think that demons, as fellow supernatural beings, do have such limitations.

Moreover, those who believe that demons use PK* *themselves* often impose different kinds of limitations on Satan and the demons. For example, C. Fred Dickason speaks generally of Satan's 'creaturely limitations' and that he is 'limited by God in his power and activity.'³ Merrill Unger also speaks of Satan's limitations as one who can 'create nothing, nor can he perpetrate any evil, physical or moral, without Jehovah's sanction.'⁴ C. Samuel Storms even contrasts the powers of demons with those of the good angels when he writes that 'Michael and his elect angels are more powerful than Satan and his demonic hosts.'⁵ Each of these theologians proceeds to address in their works how the serious Christian practitioner, though not immune to the influences of demons, can overcome their dominative influence and power. But this is enough to establish that one is indeed permitted to delimit the powers of demons.

² Full demonisation typifies complete ownership, and, so, multiple agents cannot both be the complete owner of the same thing.

³ C. Fred Dickason, *Angels: Elect & Evil* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1975), pp. 181, 235.

⁴ Merrill F. Unger, *Biblical Demonology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1994), p. 26.

⁵ C. Samuel Storms, *Tough Topics: Biblical Answers to 25 Challenging Questions* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), p. 163.

The task before the supporter of demonic PK*, then, is not to object to ECI on the basis of any supposed presumptuousness of delimiting demonic power, but on the basis of reasons given by which to infer those delimitations.

Finally, it is important to recall the distinction between what is metaphysically *possible* and what is *plausible*. The former is an acknowledgment of what *could feasibly* obtain. The latter is an acknowledgment of what *probably did* obtain given what is known of the relevant history of the actual world. I have acknowledged already that it is metaphysically possible that demons utilise PK*. But its metaphysical possibility is not sufficient to establish whether demons actually utilise such a mechanism. Likewise, ECI is a metaphysical possibility and, so, cannot be rendered impossible on grounds that it is presumptuous. I have already noted that it is not only not presumptuous, but that traditional supporters of PK* themselves imply that limitations on the powers of demons can, in fact, be made. Since I have given reasons for thinking that the demons' interactions with this world are limited to CI, then any objections to my conclusion will have to interact with those reasons.

I shall turn now to consider the objection that if a PK* ability is probabilistically ruled out as a basic power of (at least some) created spirits, then this would have implications for human souls thought to be PK*-related to their bodies on substance dualism.

Objection #2: If it is unacceptable that demons psychokinetically interact with matter for the reasons given in the last chapter, then this means that it would be unacceptable for human souls (per substance dualism) to interact with matter, namely their own bodies, for similar reasons.

There might be a concern amongst anthropological dualists in thinking that PK* is not a known mechanism of created souls in general and of human souls in particular. Indeed, it would seem that anthropological dualism *qua* substance dualism entails some kind of PK* in that human souls interact with their physical bodies. Gregory Boyd explains what he sees as a connection between anthropological PK* and demonic PK*:

The mystery of how spirit affects the physical world is hardly unique [...]; it is manifested in every free action humans perform. For example, one might analyze the neurological processes of the brain that precede all of my actions to understand the mechanics of how my brain affects my body. But scientific analysis is unable to explain how *I* affect these neurological processes or even define what *I* am. In every explanation other than a strictly materialistic one, *I* transcend the physical processes of the brain. *I* make free decisions that *somehow* activate all this neurological activity. But the inherent limitations of our empirical methodologies are such that this "somehow" remains a mystery. We see, then, that the claim that evil spirits can adversely affect our physical environment should in principle be no more

controversial to the nonmaterialist than the claim that [...] I can affect my environment.⁶

Naturally, some may wonder whether the objections of the last chapter against demonic PK* would constitute objections to anthropological PK* given Boyd's implied notion that both kinds of PK* are actually the same kind of activity and, so, equally uncontroversial for the 'nonmaterialist'. If it is right to draw this comparison, then it implies that PK* is not a unique power assigned to demons but is something that also obtains in human spirits. And if PK* does not likely occur in one kind of created spirit, neither does it likely occur in another kind of created spirit. I want to respond to this objection by arguing that comparing demonic PK* to anthropological PK* is inappropriate; hence, one kind of PK* does not act as precedent for the other.

Consider, first, the usual approach offered by Cartesians vis-à-vis substance dualism in that the human spirit is *paired* (by God) with its body so that there just is an undisclosed causal connexion (or a fixed nomological association) between a spirit and its material body.⁷ But if this serves to elucidate how demons interact with physical objects, the dissimilarities are immediately apparent: unlike Cartesian dualism, the pairings of demons with objects are ephemeral and pertain to a variety of different, successive objects diachronically. Cartesian-style pairing in human composites consists of lifelong pairings for as long as the human person exists with his body. And that body is the only object the soul will ever be paired with.

⁶ Gregory Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil: Constructing a Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), pp. 304-305.

⁷ E.g. John Foster, *The Immaterial Self: A Defence of the Cartesian Dualist Conception of the Mind* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 163ff. That human spirits are paired with certain chunks of matter is a feature angels lack. Angels, after all, were not created as indigenous inhabitants of this world whereas human beings are.

However, one might point out that since the body naturally changes over time (particularly since individual cells die out and get replaced by new ones) then the enduring body is actually a series of new objects as well. But surely the substance dualist is referring to the body as a *kind* such that there can be changes – gradual changes to the point of every cell being replaced – that do not break such pairing. It would be analogous to how a remote control is paired with a certain device. Surely that device could undergo all sorts of changes and never break that pairing. But those changes would only be permitted to a certain extent. If crucial changes *in kind* obtained, then no doubt the pairing would be broken. Moreover, according to this understanding, demons would engage in serial pairing. In other words, demons would not pair with only one object during its lifetime, but it would pair with multiple objects one after another. It seems obvious to me that the gradual changes of the human body that retain the pairing relationship are nothing like the changes of objects to which demons would be similarly paired. Furthermore, Cartesian pairing is not a *voluntary* action on the part of the subject of that pairing. It is as much an involuntary action in human beings as the brain's processing of a signal from a pin prick. Demonic pairings, if the comparison holds, would presumably be *wilful* and *on demand* by the subject thus making the acts of pairing completely voluntary. It is increasingly apparent, then, that the Cartesian notion of anthropological PK* is just not the right comparison with demonic PK*.

If the Cartesian version of substance dualism is not what the objector has in mind, then perhaps Thomistic dualism may draw the appropriate comparison. For Thomistic dualists, following Aristotle, they posit that the spirit *informs* its body (its *hylas*) and is an essential part

of the person's whole metaphysical nature.⁸ There is a sense that the soul essentially *belongs* with its body while it is alive and then is unnaturally separated when the body perishes. It is now starting to look like Thomistic anthropology is also unhelpful as a comparison with demonic PK*. No demon could be the substantial form (or *morphē*) of any physical object for the same reasons: the interactions are ephemeral, with multiple, successive objects, and are voluntary. Perhaps the Thomist will consider comparing the hylomorphism of a demon and an object with the doctrine of the Incarnation of Christ. This would avoid any speculation as to whether the demon provides the sole *esse* to any particular object. But another problem arises in the comparison. For Aquinas, the Incarnation entails a singular, unifying individual (*hypostasis*) bearing two natures.⁹ When one refers to 'Christ' she is referring to the compositum that includes both his divine nature and his human nature in a whole subject. The same should be said of the demonic hylomorphism if understood this way, viz. that we have a new compositum through incarnation on our hands. The demon-object becomes a whole subject. On this reading, the relationship between demon and object implies an awkward result, namely, the object is a nature sustained by the demon. It becomes part of the nature of the demon. Let us imagine that some demon, say *Azazel*, incarnates a chair at *t*. Thus, if *Azazel* is referred to by another demon, then 'Azazel' refers to the soul *and the chair it incarnates*. *Azazel*, during his union with the chair has, at *t*, a chair nature. The chair is, at *t*, the body of *Azazel*. While this scenario is possible in elucidating how a demon temporarily informs some object or other, the result remains awkward in that the object is also forever part of the

⁸ E.g. J. P. Moreland and Scott B. Rae, *Body & Soul: Human Nature & the Crisis in Ethics* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), pp. 202-203.

⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *Compendium Theologiae* I. 211-212.

subject. Once Azazel departs the chair at $t+1$ then the chair is the former body or *corpse* of Azazel. The chair will always be identified with Azazel just as the body of Moses will always be his. Accordingly, I do not think even Aquinas would construe demonic PK* as an instance of either an incarnation or a hylomorphic composition. Given the disparity, anthropological PK* cannot be compared to demonic PK* on Thomistic grounds.¹⁰

I have one final critique of the objection raised in this section that does not depend on which notion of anthropological dualism one adopts. That souls would be united with bodies at all is declared to be the prerogative of God (e.g. Genesis 2.7; Zechariah 12.1) and so any attribution to demons of being united with physical objects, along with its other difficulties, would be an encroachment upon the prerogative of God as this kind of special creator. Consequently, the PK* power of demons cannot be compared to the PK* power human souls have. The demons' alleged PK* power, in addition to its being ephemeral, voluntary, and diachronically affective of multiple objects, seems to be a power exclusively relegated to God. This makes it an extremely controversial comparison. These considerations, then, seem lethal to any hope of associating demonic PK* to the divine prerogative of anthropological pairings. Therefore, the comparison of anthropological PK* with demonic PK* is inappropriate for the

¹⁰ I will make quick mention of one more possibility, namely that of emergent dualism. Emergent dualism is the view that the human soul emerges out of the development of the human organism once certain, relevant conditions are met. Once the soul emerges, it can interact with its body. Now, it seems rather self-evident to me that emergent dualism cannot be the right theory since the corporeal body to which the soul belongs must begin to exist *prior* to the emergence of its interactive soul (see William Hasker, *The Emergent Self* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999)). The soul emerges only after the body from which it comes physiologically develops in some relevant way. But this cannot be enlightening at all for understanding demonic PK*. Demons obviously do not emerge from the development of certain objects by which to interact with those object, nor is it even generally correct to say that they have their genesis in the material world at all. But even if they did, some of the same objections to Cartesianism and Thomism as analogies to demonic psychokinesis also apply here (e.g. being an ephemeral and voluntary connexion).

reasons given. If the comparison is inappropriate, as I have argued, then the objections to demonic PK* do not function as objections to anthropological PK*.¹¹

In the last of the philosophical objections, I shall review and consider the objection based on the apparent widespread reports of demonic PK* phenomena.

Objection #3: If demonic PK is false, then it would be difficult if not impossible to account for rampant worldwide reports of apparitions and poltergeists from the past to the present.*

Reports of first-hand experiences of sinister spirits interacting with human beings and nature seem to be universally cross-cultural.¹² None of the reported episodes is restricted to a certain social class, time period, or province. Unger argues:

Denying all possibility of diabolic miracle as an underlying cause and dynamic, it seems difficult to account for the perpetuation of such a vast mass of superstition and fanaticism from the very dawn of historical times to the present. Where there is a great deal of smoke, there is likely to be a fire somewhere.¹³

¹¹ The project of defending ECI in the last chapter was to show, not that demonic PK* is somehow metaphysically *impossible*, but to show that such a relation is *unlikely*. That anything should have any kind of PK* ability is bound to be mystifying, but I do not think it to be an impossibility. And it is an obvious error of extrapolation to insist that the unlikelihood of PK* for one kind of being is to affirm the unlikelihood of PK* for all kinds of beings. My project has been, to frame it in the negative, to offer a de facto case against positing PK* as a power had by the demons in order to fully explain how they interact with this world. And this will not entail that no other kind of being (i.e. angels) does not or cannot have this power.

¹² See Craig S. Keener, *Miracles*, Vol. II (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), pp. 769-856. Though Keener's primary focus in his documentation of demonic activity both past and present is demonic possession, he also chronicles recurrent episodes of demonic PK* abilities (e.g. demons causing illnesses).

¹³ Unger, *Biblical Demonology*, p. 66.

However, there are other potential causes that can account for the ‘perpetuation of such a vast mass of superstition and fanaticism’ that are not predicated on the actual occurrence of ‘diabolical miracle’ (Unger’s expression for demonic PK*).

For one possibility, perhaps the reports of demonic PK* activity are (unfairly?) Westernised interpretations of cross-cultural spiritual phenomena. Christopher Partridge argues that there is a pervasive spiritual awakening that can be felt in the West that has been obtaining, and may continue to obtain, apart from the decline of traditional religious systems.¹⁴ As indicated by Partridge, they tend to be taking their interpretive cues of various spiritual phenomena from Eastern thought. But, he adds, one ‘turns [...] West for its demonology.’ Why? Because it is due, at least in part, to

its familiarity and accessibility. In other words, while there are, of course, demonologies within the Indian religious tradition that could be used in Western alternative spiritualities, these are complex, not well known, and are not prominent within the reservoir of Western occulture. Christianity demonology, on the other hand, is familiar and, perhaps largely because of popular culture, plausible. We should not be surprised therefore that [...] it is Christian demonology that is pre-eminent and dominant in the Western psyche.¹⁵

¹⁴ Christopher Partridge, *The Re-Enchantment of the West*, Vol. II (London: T & T Clark, 2005).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 278.

What I do *not* want to imply is that the overlay of Christian demonology in interpreting alleged demonic activity on a worldwide basis is somehow inappropriate, only that the ‘familiar’ framework that is privileged as ‘Christian demonology’ already contains the controversial tenet of demonic PK* – the very matter under dispute. In other words, perhaps the belief in ‘diabolical miracle’ is derived simply from the sociological fact that it is a *familiar explanation* and not because it is directly observed. I submit that observations are often (if not always) overlaid with interpretations that tend to go beyond the immediate warrant of the evidence (see my discussion of this in Chapter 6, Section 6.2, Objection #2). Perhaps the *explananda* that is the ‘vast mass of superstition’ is one that is merely met with a *misinterpretation*. Even someone like Derek Prince, himself a champion of demonic PK*, is quick to caution that ‘[p]ersonal experience by itself is never a sufficient basis for establishing biblical doctrine.’¹⁶

What could be a rival interpretation to the one offered by traditionalists like Unger? The Augustinian interpretation I offered in Chapter 6 (also in Section 6.2, Objection #2) could be applied here. That is to say that perhaps many first-hand experiences of alleged physical manifestations of demons are really internalised psycho-projections of phenomena that only *appear* to be extramental (something like a vision or hallucination). If the Augustinian theory is at least as good an explanation as Unger’s ‘diabolical miracle’ hypothesis, then perhaps the cross-cultural experiences shared by those past and present are simply further evidences of the *extent* to which psycho-projection obtains. But what of situations where there is material evidence (say, that there are physical injuries, changes in temperature, or relocated objects said to be caused by demonic activity)? Perhaps these are not caused by demons at all. Instead, the

¹⁶ Derek Prince, *They Shall Expel Demons: What You Need to Know about Demons--Your Invisible Enemies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 1998), p. 27.

demons in the psycho-projections merely lead one to *think* that they caused them. In those cases, there may be perfectly ordinary explanations that explain the material evidence.¹⁷ But given the concurrence of the demonic encounter, the victim is duped into thinking that a demon caused it. For example, there was a recent report in Pennsylvania of a demon alleged to scratch the hand of a photojournalist who visited a house thought to be inhabited by demons. It was reported that the photojournalist ‘felt his hand burning and saw a scratch on his wrist’.¹⁸ Supposing that the encounter were unquestionably demonic (let us suppose that a ghastly apparition gestured to the photojournalist’s hand and said, ‘See what I did!’), and the experience was not a deliberate hoax, the scratch could have been caused by some ordinary object prior to the photojournalist’s arrival into the home. Bear in mind that some scratches can occur unnoticeably. Once in the home, perhaps the man begins to sweat with fear. The salt in the sweat then burns the pre-existing scratch on the hand of the photojournalist who, upon being prompted by the apparition, makes the obvious connection.

The point is that psycho-projection can accommodate indubitable experiences of the demonic even in situations where material evidence is present. If the notion of psycho-projection can accommodate these reports, even in cases where material evidence is present where one cannot rule out the concurrence of an ordinary cause, then psycho-projection is preserved. And if psycho-projection is preserved, then such reports do not automatically constitute refutations of ECI. Therefore, we are under no obligation to affirm demonic PK* merely on the basis that there are such worldwide reports.

¹⁷ See James Houran and Rense Lange, eds., *Hauntings and Poltergeists: Multidisciplinary Perspectives* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2001), Section II.

¹⁸ See Darcie Loreno, ‘Ghost Attacks Photographer in PA House “Haunted” with Demons, Spirits’ (26 July 2014), <<http://fox43.com/2014/07/25/ghost-attacks-in-hanover-haunted-house/#axzz38baFhcRq>> [accessed 4 May 2015].

In the next section, we shall explore a series of theological objections to the notion of ECI. Since traditional traditionalists in demonology usually object to the absence of a PK* ability on the basis of certain episodes and teachings in the Bible, I shall consider each passage that appears to imply this.

9.3 Theological Objections

As we have seen (in Chapter 2, Sections 2.5-2.7), some have claimed that demons are material (or quasi-material) on the basis of biblical passages that appear to affirm that demons manifest (both visually and audibly) in the world. By way of response, I argued that none of those passage speak of or even imply such manifestations. However, there are other passages that appear to imply a PK* power that do *not* rely on the supposition that visible or audible manifestations are taking place. If these passages state or imply that demons do have PK*, then clearly demons do have PK* as a basic power alongside CI, thus disproving ECI. Let us now survey passages that seem to imply demonic PK* in order to determine if they count as evidence against ECI. In the following subsections, I shall consider those passages based on the order in which they appear in the Bible. I shall begin with the well-known episode in Job.

Passage #1: According to Job 1-2, Satan causes atmospheric disturbances and smites Job with skin lesions. These imply Satan's PK-relation to both nature and human bodies.

The account of Job in the book bearing his name could be seen as evidence that demons can and do interact with the physical world.¹⁹ The story of Job – a literary work that is by no means incontrovertibly historical²⁰ – is known to feature *haśśāṭān* (the Hebrew term for ‘the satan’ or ‘Satan’) as one exhibiting supernatural power over the material world surrounding Job, in order to perturb his spiritual fidelity.²¹ The author of Job chronicles the hardship wrought on Job by beginning with the destruction of some of Job’s servants at the hands of the Sabeans where, following this, ‘[t]he fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them’ (1.16). This incident is immediately followed by another tragedy: ‘The Chaldeans formed three groups and made a raid on the camels and took them and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword’ (v. 17). In the next few verses we learn of another atmospheric tragedy, namely, that ‘a great wind came across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young people, and they are dead’ (v. 19). It is then in the next chapter that the author reports a direct physical assault by Satan on Job’s flesh:

¹⁹ I.e. C. Samuel Storms, *Tough Topics: Biblical Answers to 25 Challenging Questions* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), pp. 147 and 149; Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), pp. 144-149, 165-167; Merrill F. Unger, *Biblical Demonology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1994), p. 189; Norman C. Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1985), pp. 88-96.

²⁰ For examples, see the diversity of opinions offered by John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews, and Mark W. Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), pp. 491-494; Roland Kenneth Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1969), pp. 1022-1027; and Norman C. Habel, *The Book of Job* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975), pp. 1-12. The Book of Job belongs to a category of Jewish writings called ‘Wisdom Literature’ and if it contains any historical contribution, it is nonetheless highly poetic and unascertainable save a slight biographical parallel with another historical figure, Elkanah, in I Samuel 1 (compare with Job 1). But this is not conclusive and is nonetheless irrelevant to the more salient point, namely, that the *śāṭān* in Job is *believed* by many to be the Devil of the New Testament.

²¹ It is worthy of note that in the Book of Job, God’s interlocutor is identified specifically as *the Satan* (*haśśāṭān*) which suggests that *śāṭān* is a generic term denoting a legal function (e.g. ‘adversary’) and could be in reference to one of the angelic beings said to be part of God’s celestial company (cf. Job 1.6) or perhaps a subtlety of Jewish propaganda designed to reflect a Persian adversary; cf. Elaine Pagels, *The Origin of Satan: How Christians Demonized Jews, Pagans, and Heretics* (New York: Random House, 1995), p. 41.

Then Satan went out from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head (2.7).

The problem for ECI is that if Satan can produce a ‘fire [...] from heaven’, ‘a great wind’, and ‘sore boils’ then there exist phenomena that require some ability beyond mere mental communicability. In assuming the conservative view that *hasśātān* is indeed Satan proper,²² the following are some reasons from the narrative itself to question the notion that Satan directly manipulates matter/energy. I submit that either Satan is actually not the vehicle of the reported disasters at all or that these occurrences are explicable by and consistent with ECI, understood weakly.

First, Job 1 does not seem to suggest that Satan is actually the *direct* cause or the *sole* cause of the calamities noted therein (viz. the attack of the Sabeans, the ‘fire [...] from heaven’, the Chaldean raid, and the ‘great wind’). The ‘fire [...] from heaven’ itself, according to verse 16, is said to be the fire *of God*. Satan’s challenge is actually laid at God’s feet:

“But put forth Thy hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse Thee to Thy face.” Then the LORD said to Satan,
"Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth

²² Of course, if the identity of *hasśātān* is anyone other than a demon or Satan himself, then Job does not offer us any counterexamples to ECI. However, the use of *hasśātān* in Job is not peculiar to only Job. *Hasśātān* also appears in Zechariah 3.1-2 and it likely refers to the Devil himself. Thus, appealing to the functional nature of the term *hasśātān* would not itself invalidate its reference to the chief of demons any more than the functional nature of *hammal’āqīm* (‘angels’) in Genesis 19.1 invalidates it as a reference to literal angels.

your hand on him." So Satan departed from the presence of the LORD (vv. 11-12).

The divine limitation to 'not put forth your hand on him' may actually suggest that these are God's direct handiwork in that he would 'put forth [His] hand' and 'touch all that [Job] has' – all of this after God's own removing of a 'hedge about him' (v. 10). This is directly in line with Job's lament in verse 21 ('the LORD has taken away'; emphasis mine) and his familial consolation in 42.11 ('Then all his brothers, and all his sisters [...] consoled him and comforted him for all the evil that *the LORD* had brought on him'; emphasis mine). By extension, it has solidarity with Isaiah, who quotes God as saying, 'I [...] create calamity; I am the LORD who does all these things' (Isaiah 45.7) and with James in the New Testament, who commentates on Job's steadfastness as the 'outcome of *the Lord's* dealings' (James 5.11; emphasis mine). This is not to say that only God was involved. Perhaps it was a *cooperative* series of events with Satan as co-conspirator. In this case it may be that Satan's role was to weakly actualise the events by (cognitively) directing Job's servants to the appropriate locales by which God unleashes the various phenomena responsible for Job's loss of servants and property.²³

Thus, it seems plausible that Satan is actually not the vehicle of the reported disasters after all. But, secondly, it may also be that these occurrences are explicable by and consistent with ECI if understood weakly. Regarding Job 2.7's mentioning of the infliction of 'sore boils' on

²³ In this sense, Satan would weakly actualize (as opposed to *strongly* actualizing) the various tragedies unleashed on Job's servants in that it is the sort of thing 'in which a person can arrange it that some state of affairs obtains by inducing someone else to cause it to happen'. Edward Wierenga, *The Nature of God: An Inquiry Into Divine Attributes* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), p. 22. In this case, Satan can arrange for the servants and family members to behave in such a way that they end up putting themselves in harm's way. And so Satan can rightly be said to 'arrange it that some state of affairs obtains without *causing* it to obtain' (p. 21).

Job's skin, it explicitly says that Satan 'struck' Job with this affliction. Curiously enough, even the use of the indicative verb 'struck' does not necessarily mean that the subject (in this case Satan) actually inflicted the ailment by his own hand. In II Samuel, to cite a parallel, Nathan accuses King David of directly having 'struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword' (12.9). But we know from Chapter 11 that Uriah was simply deployed by David (through Joab) to a military post that was inevitably going to lead to his death. Perhaps the same meaning attends Satan's involvement in Job 2.6-7. It seems as if this reflects the consistent storytelling device that puts the instrument of affliction (or killing) into the hands of the one morally responsible for the end result even though the very medium of affliction (or 'smiting' in this case) was indirect.²⁴

This view might be defensible only if we have a viable interpretation of Satan's activity in 2.6-7 in accord with ECI. Such an interpretation is indeed available and accords well with ECI given the notion that Satan could incite Job to produce the lesions psychosomatically.²⁵ I should begin by noting that the word expressed as 'sore boils' in some translations (e.g. the KJV and NASV) is *sh^ehⁱn* in Hebrew (*elkos* in the Greek LXX) which refers to some unspecified kind of skin lesions. In the Pentateuch, such a condition has been understood by some scholars and commentators to be a form of leprosy (specifically *elephantiasis*)²⁶ sometimes said to be brought on through divine judgement.²⁷ But any specific diagnosis or pathology remains

²⁴ Consider also how the Pentateuch declares that 'the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart' (Exodus 9.12). But given that we are also told that 'Pharaoh hardened his [own] heart' (8.32) then we might imagine that the divine hardening was a complex and indirect result of the plagues.

²⁵ See Chapter 3, Section 3.5.3.

²⁶ See Hagin, *The Book of Job*, p. 19; Davidson, Stibbs, and Kevan, *The New Bible Commentary*, p. 389; Ralph MacKenzie, 'Job', in *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. by Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), p. 515; Maria Evangelatou, 'From Word into Image: The Visualization of Ulcer in Byzantine Illustrated Manuscripts of the Book of Job', *Gesta*, 48 (2009), p. 23; J. V. Kinnier Wilson, 'Leprosy In Ancient Mesopotamia', *Revue d'Assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale*, 60 (1966), p. 56f.

²⁷ Cf. Exodus 9.9 and Deuteronomy 28.27.

elusive in principle and in fact. Principally, it may be difficult if not impossible to formulate any kind of retrospective diagnosis of any historical symptoms from a modern vantage point given that diseases are perspectival interpretations of certain phenomena.²⁸ At the very least, there are situational and textual obstacles (the meaning of key words used in describing the symptoms, the ignoring of additional key pieces of data, etc.) that make any diagnostic task less than straightforward. In fact, even if a clear set of symptoms could be reasonably ascertained in some historical description, we may be ignoring the possibility of an unknown cause or even of multiple causes of the noted symptoms. Biological anthropologist Piers Mitchell cautions:

Sometimes the list of symptoms given may not seem to match up with any single modern disease. Alternatively, the symptoms may be compatible with a number of conditions. It is not always clear which symptoms are most important in helping us come to a diagnosis.²⁹

As it pertains to the present case, what are we to do with Job 2.8's mentioning of Job using broken pottery fragments to scratch his skin lesions? It is unclear whether Job uses those

²⁸ Andrew Cunningham believes that any 'disease' is mostly a social convention apart from any biological considerations, and so '[t]here is no "real" disease, with an identity separate from its sufferers at any given time, which can be separated out as a timeless entity for us to give our modern labels to, years —centuries— after the events'. 'Identifying Disease in the Past: Cutting the Gordian Knot', *Asclepio*, 54 (2002), p. 20. This is not to deny that victims lack their self-described symptoms, only that different societies (past and present, domestic and abroad) will have a different 'array of diseases' from which to diagnose those symptoms.

²⁹ Piers Mitchell, 'Retrospective Diagnosis and the Use of Historical Texts for Investigating Disease in the Past', *International Journal of Paleopathology*, 1 (2011), p. 84. Mitchell himself offers six criteria that augment the reliability of any retrospective diagnoses through historical texts (p. 85), citing a chronicle of William of Tyre as a paradigm example (cf. p. 85).

fragments to scratch the lesions for relief or out of some symbolic gesture.³⁰ Apart from this interpretive difficulty, the use of *sh^ehîn* evinces some kind of sudden erythema which seems to be a description *inconsistent* with the typical onset of elephantiasis.³¹ One possible alternative conducive to such a sudden onset is ‘hives’ or, more formally, *urticaria*. Urticaria is acknowledged to be derived from ‘[psychological] factors [that] seem to play a considerable part in approximately one-third of chronic urticaria cases.’³² Such has been specifically categorised as *cholinergic urticaria*, which refers to the eruption of hives as a result of emotional stress.³³ Though urticaria is not always the result of psychological causes, the fact that it is a body-wide set of skin lesions accompanied by itching and erupts as a result of emotional stress make it a justified possibility. Job’s immediate reaction associated with its possible itching condition (2.8) and the fact that these eruptions occur in the wake of what would be considered by all lights to be one of the most emotionally stressful occurrences anyone could suffer – the loss of one’s children, friends, and possessions – make cholinergic urticaria a more reasonable diagnosis (if one can be given). My objective here is not to actually diagnose this condition but to suggest that a condition of urticaria bearing such symptoms in the context of Job’s loss is every bit as possible a diagnosis as some non-psychologically derived skin condition. As Norman C. Habel correctly notes: ‘The sickness with which Job is afflicted is

³⁰ See Walton, Matthews, and Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, p. 496.

³¹ ‘[E]lephantiasis develops slowly, and often lasts for years before death ensues; but the narrative almost certainly intends us to understand that Job was immediately smitten with intensely painful and loathsome symptoms, [...]’. Samuel Rolles Driver and George Buchanan Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Job*, Volume 1 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1921), p. 24.

³² Anne Grahame, ‘Management of Chronic Urticaria’, *Canadian Family Physician*, 33 (1987), p. 382.

³³ See Bettina Wedi, ‘Urticaria’, *Journal der Deutschen Dermatologischen Gesellschaft*, 6 (2008), p. 314. Also see ‘Urticaria’, *Black’s Medical Dictionary, 42nd Edition* (London: A&C Black, 2010), *Credo Reference*, accessed November 13, 2014; Malcolm Greaves, ‘Chronic Urticaria’, *The Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology*, 105 (2000), p. 667; D. Russell Davis and D. W. Kennard, ‘Urticaria’, *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 8 (1964), pp. 203-206.

probably not to be identified with a specific disease.³⁴ If Satan is a thoroughly immaterial being who interacts only cognitively, this would not be a medical episode inconsistent with what one might expect of someone like Job under extreme mental duress. As such, Satan is indeed the cause of the ailment.

Moreover, Satan might have exacerbated the problem by mentally communicating to Job that *You have been unfairly judged by God* (Job 19.6-7; 27.1-2) and that *God deliberately refuses to hear your cries* (30.20-31). These thoughts would result not only in emotional trauma (a sort of crisis of faith) but an expectation that God might continue to be arbitrarily torturing such an upright man as Job himself. What we can say is that if Satan is truly culpable for having 'smote' Job with skin lesions in some way, at least the duress of abandonment from God, the removal of his protection, and the wilful infliction of suffering are surely traumatic enough so as to produce some of the most dramatic psychosomatic physical conditions consonant with the phenomenon of cholinergic urticaria.³⁵ And this understanding is perfectly consistent with, if not suggested by, the mechanism of CI.

Therefore, the book of Job, even if taken at face value, does not offer readers any support for demonic PK*. I shall now move to the New Testament and address other iconic passages often put forward in support of demonic PK*. I shall begin by examining a man being made 'blind and mute' by Satan.

³⁴ Habel, *The Book of Job*, p. 95.

³⁵ Another example of a physical condition resulting from extreme stress is recorded in Luke 22.44 where Jesus is said to be anticipating his own death and this agonising results in his sweating drops 'like great drops of blood.'

Passage #2: Satan is reported in Matthew 12.22-28 as making a human being 'blind and mute.'

The only way this could occur is if Satan indeed interacts with a person's biology.

The central text here concerns an exorcism given by Jesus on the Sabbath day – an event that provokes criticism from His Jewish interlocutors. In the specific account as told in Matthew 12, Satan is reported to have made someone blind and mute:

Then there was brought to [Jesus] a demon-possessed man who was blind and dumb, and He healed him, so that the dumb man spoke and saw. And all the multitudes were amazed, and began to say, "This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?" But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, "This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons." And knowing their thoughts He said to them, "Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself shall not stand. And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then shall his kingdom stand? And if I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? Consequently they shall be your judges. But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Matthew 12.22-28).

Three interpretations of this episode are possible: (i) The man was not actually demon-possessed but simply had an ailment that was associated with a demon on the grounds that

illnesses and diseases were often attributed to such spirits; (ii) The demonic possession is merely coincidental with the man's otherwise naturally derived illnesses, a situation in which the man is subsequently freed from both; and (iii) the demonic possession is the direct cause of the man's being blind and mute. I take this last interpretation to be the most common position,³⁶ and one that would appear to be in support of demonic PK, and therefore potentially threatening to ECI.

But in seeking an adequate explanation of the man's condition, it seems to me that it need not be one that necessarily threaten ECI after all. I must remind readers of the difficulties of engaging in a firm retrospective diagnosis as it may be difficult or impossible to do.³⁷ More specifically, the passage only indicates that the man has the symptoms of being 'blind and mute' and not how those symptoms came to be. As it turns out, there is another cause that can yield these symptoms – a cause not necessarily rooted in a *biological* malady. Of course if we *knew* that the ailments are defined in such a way as to suggest some sort of creative power (say, the sudden appearance of cancerous tumours) there would be a need to invoke a psychokinetic power to explain that. But since the passage speaks merely of the man displaying the symptoms 'blind and mute', one would need to rule out the possibility of something like a cognitive malfunction that could be to blame in order for this passage to count as a sufficient counterexample to ECI.³⁸ As it turns out, there is a known cognitive malfunction – a documented mental disorder – that relegates the conjoined symptoms of being 'blind and

³⁶ See John Albert Broadus, *Commentary on Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1989), p. 267; also see Brown, Fitzmyer, and Murphy, *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, p. 85.

³⁷ See my comments in Section 9.3.1 above.

³⁸ We should think also about how sin is said to affect our cognitive abilities (cf. Genesis 3.6-11; 4.6-7; Romans 3.10-18; Hebrews 3.13; I John 2.9, 11). A similar association (viz. 'transworld depravity' and its ability to adversely affect good choices) appears in Alvin C. Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), pp. 48-53.

mute' to a singular cognitive cause. This condition is referred to as *functional neurological symptom disorder* (or 'conversion disorder') which is to say that sensory or mobility functions (such as limb mobility or the ability to see, hear, or speak) are disabled but are not the result of any bodily maladies. Conversion disorder is identified by the most recent *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (V)* as a mental disorder 'characterized by neurological symptoms that are inconsistent with neurological pathophysiology.'³⁹ Psychologist John Kihlstrom explains some of the interesting symptoms of conversion disorders:

The conversion disorders, for their part, include psychogenic deafness, blindness, and other impairments of sensory-perceptual function, either general (i.e., affecting the entire modality) or selective (i.e., affecting the perception of only certain categories of objects and events), as well as paralysis, aphonia, and other impairments of voluntary motor function (these, too, may be general or specific). Again, these are functional disorders of perception and action (Kihlstrom, Barnhardt, & Tataryn, 1991), mimicking neurological disease, but occurring in the absence of organic damage. [...] [Dr. Pierre] Janet's patients said that they could not see, hear, or feel; yet at the same time, their behavior was obviously responsive to visual, auditory, or tactile events. [...]

³⁹ *DSM-V*, (Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Association, 2013), p. 326.

Since the appearance of Janet's treatises, a number of formal experiments have confirmed his essential observations.⁴⁰

Kihlstrom later invokes Dr. E. R. Hilgard who asks us to

[i]magine a circumstance in which the subsystem responsible for visual perception is cut off from the executive ego, but remains able to communicate laterally with other subordinate systems. A person in this situation will be denied the experience of seeing; yet because the visual subsystem continues to process inputs, execute outputs, and pass information to (and receive information from) other subsystems, the person may still be able to respond adaptively to visual events – a common observation in cases of functional blindness.⁴¹

Thus, blindness in this sense is simply 'mimicking neurological disease' in that the patient is

being 'denied the experience of seeing' that is not reducible to any 'organic damage.'

Furthermore, research in neuropsychology is already reporting numerous accounts of how one can be paralysed so as to be unable to speak (among other cognitive disorders) that is induced

⁴⁰ John Kihlstrom, 'Dissociative and Conversion Disorders', *Cognitive Science and Clinical Disorders*, ed. by Dan Stein and Jeffrey Young (London: Academic Press, 1992), p. 248.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 263.

by the occurrence of psychological trauma.⁴² If these conditions lack any known physical cause and mental events can be directly responsible for things like ‘functional blindness’ and ‘aphonia’, then the ability to cognitively induce such occurrences would not be beyond the power of a purely immaterial being like a demon. As psychodynamic immaterialism indicates, it is possible that psychosomatic perturbations in a human being can be induced by the demon’s interaction in the host.⁴³ Again, this is not to diagnose the Matthean case of demonic possession as a definitive case of ‘conversion disorder’, only to point out that the event is purely consistent with the man’s condition being caused psychologically (such as that envisaged by my model). A demon, thus, can cognitively interact with a person in such a way as to make the person seem ‘blind and dumb’, in which case the demon counts as being part of the psychogenic origin. Since conversion disorders are typically treated with stress-relief practices, one might consider the removal of a demon to be anti-stress therapy *par excellence* as surely the jettisoning of a demonic presence would inaugurate the healing process.

But are there any *morphological* maladies by demons reported in the Gospels that would appear to be inexplicable by similar means? In the next section, we shall explore the occurrence of a woman being ‘bent double’ by Satan, something that would seem to necessarily imply a PK* ability.

Passage #3: In Luke 13.11-16, it is reported that Jesus healed a woman physically ‘bent double’ by Satan. This implies that Satan can enact morphological changes in people.

⁴² For example, see D. A. Weber and C. R. Reynolds, ‘Clinical Perspectives on Neurobiological Effects of Psychological Trauma’, *Neuropsychology Review*, 14 (2004), pp. 115-129.

⁴³ I refer again to Chapter 3, Section 3.5.3.

According to this particular incident in Luke, there is a woman who is said to be 'bent double' (*sugkúptousa*) in which case we would have a physical effect resulting from a non-physical 'spirit' (and so demonic PK):

And there was a woman who had had a disabling spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your disability." And he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and she glorified God. But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, said to the people, "There are six days in which work ought to be done. Come on those days and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day." Then the Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it away to water it? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?" (Luke 13.11-16).⁴⁴

⁴⁴ There are other Lukan passages (like Luke 9.42 and Acts 19.15-16) that speak of demons doing things like 'throwing' and 'overpowering' physical persons. But the contexts make apparent that these are possession cases, and possession cases are not instances of demonic souls acting directly on physical bodies.

The word translated as ‘disabling’ is *astheneia* and refers to ‘a state of incapacity’ due to any number of possible causes.⁴⁵ It seems rather clear in context that her being ‘bent double’ is this disability and so we should not think of the disability as somehow distinct from her physical condition. But verse 11 does make clear that the condition is not naturally derived but is caused by ‘a spirit’ (*pneuma*). The very last verse (v. 16) removes any ambiguity as to which ‘spirit’ is said to be responsible for this physical malady, namely ‘Satan’. Thus, any attempt to disassociate Satan with the woman’s condition in order to avoid any negative implications for ECI would fail.⁴⁶ Hence, on grounds of this passage, theologians like Merrill Unger are quick to say that demons have ‘amazing strength’ and that they ‘have power over the human body to cause [...] physical defects and deformities (Luke 13:11-17).’⁴⁷ But is this the best conclusion to draw?

It is not beyond imagination that a malevolent mind could incite the woman to simply will herself into being bent over (as if by hypnotic suggestion) and, subsequently, develop a malformed spine (as in inflicting upon oneself a form of scoliosis). This would be another instance of Satan weakly actualising some affliction, namely the causing of the woman to be

⁴⁵ Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), p. 78. Graham H. Twelftree interprets ‘disabling spirit’ as ‘a spirit of sickness [...] or infirmity’. *In the Name of Jesus: Exorcism Among Early Christians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), p. 86. *Astheneia* can be due to anything from less severe ailments to diseases. If understood figuratively, the disability may be one of moral incapacity, such as character weakness or lack of insight.

⁴⁶ Luke’s opening remarks about the victim having a ‘sickness caused by a spirit’ (verse 11) seems conclusive. However, Luke, in his commentary on the situation in the same verse, might simply be attaching an unwarranted theological context to the woman’s malady. And given that the passage repeatedly refers to this as a ‘sickness’ (one that lasted 18 years no less!) and that it is not ultimately handled as an exorcism proper, the likelihood of this being a demonic possession case is small. The crux, then, lies in Jesus’ response in verse 16 where he says that ‘Satan has bound [her] for eighteen long years.’ That Satan is said to be the direct agent of her ‘binding’ (*desmou* – from the same root word used of Jesus who ‘binds (*dēsē*) the strong man’, Matt. 12.29) surely evinces a diabolical bringing about of the woman’s physical back problem.

⁴⁷ Unger, *Biblical Demonology*, p. 67.

'bent double.'⁴⁸ And since the woman is said to be bent *over* ('bent over' is the primary translation of *sugkúptousa*)⁴⁹ rather than, say, bent *sideways* (something indicative of scoliosis), perhaps a physiological comparison can be made in what is medically identified as a species of *kyphosis*.⁵⁰ Kyphosis (or 'hunchback') is defined as an

abnormal degree of backward curvature of the part of the spine between the neck and the lumbar regions. Backward curvature is normal in this region and kyphosis is an exaggeration of the normal curve. It is commonly the result of bad postural habits in adolescence or of osteoporosis.⁵¹

Despite its being common among adolescents (usually as a mild condition resulting from slouching), if such a condition, as noted here, can be the result of 'bad postural habits' (and so officially referred to as *postural kyphosis*), then it might be something that could be exaggerated even more so in order to lead to a dramatic curvature of the spine. Perhaps during a large portion of the woman's 18 years she was mentally coerced into her ongoing acts of extreme bad posturing. If the woman were 'trained' into this position for multiple years, perhaps she had fallen prey to some exaggerated form of kyphosis (or something like it) which then was subsequently healed by Jesus some 18 years henceforth. In short, what began as a

⁴⁸ See note 13.

⁴⁹ Friberg, Friberg, and Miller, *op. cit.* p. 360.

⁵⁰ I remind the reader once again of the difficulties of retrospective diagnoses as discussed in Section 9.3.1 above.

⁵¹ 'Kyphosis', *Collins Dictionary of Medicine* (London: HarperCollins, 2005), accessed through *Credo Reference*. I am not insinuating that the woman herself was an adolescent. The study only shows that such conditions are *common* in adolescents, not exclusive to them.

‘willed’ contortion of the spine ended up as a more permanent malformation long after the Satanic influence. Such an act is consistent with the apparent absence of any explicit exorcism taking place in the woman’s healing despite the 18-year condition as being the ongoing PK* product of a spirit.

Suffice it to say, one need not appeal to any mysterious auxiliary power like psychokinesis in order to account for the demonic affliction when it seems perfectly within a medical context to adduce a behavioural habit to explain the woman’s malady (a habit that could be imposed or communicated through an ongoing cognitive suggestion).

So far we have explored passages describing episodes that appear to imply psychokinesis but can be accounted for in ways consistent with ECI. Our next and final consideration will be to explore a teaching passage that seems to suggest that Satan can manipulate physical matter with which to produce ‘signs and lying wonders.’

Passage #4: II Thessalonians 2.8-9 reports that Satan can perform ‘signs and lying wonders.’

This is the language of nature miracles and implies that Satan can interact with nature.

God, as the creator of the universe, is well-understood to have the divine power to create and manipulate the universe under his control. We are wholly accustomed to the declarations that God’s ongoing interventions in history are miraculous acts or, to use the biblical terminology, ‘signs and wonders.’⁵² However, the New Testament also comments on Satan’s apparently similar ability to perform ‘signs and wonders’ according to Paul’s second letter to the Thessalonians, where he writes:

⁵² See Deuteronomy 6.22; 7.19; 26.8; 29.3; 34.11; Nehemiah 9.10; Psalm 135.9; Jeremiah 32.20; Daniel 4.2-3; 6.27; Acts 2.19, 22, 43; 4.30; 5.12; 6.8; 7.36; 14.3; Romans 15.19; II Corinthians 12.12; Hebrews 2.4.

And then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders.⁵³

The ‘lawless one’ (whose identity is undefined) is ‘in accord with the activity of Satan’ and will engineer all ‘power and signs and false wonders.’ Naturally, such a description invokes the language of the kinds of miracles of the Hebrew Exodus under Moses, the miracles of Jesus, and the miracles of Jesus’ post-ascension disciples. Each of these display clear physical acts of creation or manipulation of earthly elements. It would be natural to suppose that since the ‘lawless one’ is said to parrot such activity in a ‘lying’ manner, then the power of Satan (and, subsequently, a demon) to physically interact with the world would appear to have canonical support.⁵⁴

However, it is not clear that ‘the activity of Satan’ is necessarily parallel to the grand ‘signs and false wonders’ variously affected by God. Even Thomas Aquinas considers such a comparison ‘repugnant.’⁵⁵ Just to contextualise this passage, the medium intellect here – said

⁵³ There is little doubt that this sentiment reflects the Old Testament’s similar prohibition of following a ‘prophet’ or ‘dreamer’ that can perform ‘a sign or a wonder’ (Deuteronomy 13.1-3).

⁵⁴ Unger is quite sure that the Satanic ‘signs and wonders’ of II Thessalonians 2 entail a ‘full and startling display of diabolic miracle’ (*Biblical Demonology*, p. 208) since the pervasiveness of cultural superstition of the past and present would make denying such power to Satan ‘difficult to account for’ otherwise (p. 66).

⁵⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae de Potentia Dei* VI. 5, *On the Power of God*, tr. by the English Dominican Fathers (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1932), p. 185. The full context of his point is: ‘God does not give [demons] the power to do things that surpass the faculty of their nature, because seeing that a

to be the agent of such action – is this anonymous ‘lawless one.’ Some theologians suppose that this refers to an eschatological antichrist figure (a geo-political magistrate) said to be instantiated prior to the divine Parousia (the second coming of Jesus).⁵⁶ In this case it is likely to be understood as a human agent (minimally a non-spiritual, physical entity) who is bringing about these ‘signs and false wonders.’ But never mind that. If Satan is the agent behind such power, just what *is* this nature of this power that enables him to perform ‘signs and wonders’? On this, I note that the phrase ‘signs and wonders’ does not *ipso facto* refer exclusively and necessarily to *miraculous* or *supernatural* occurrences of a psychokinetic nature and that to treat ‘signs’ or ‘wonders’ as synonyms for ‘miracles’ is generally mistaken. Samuel Meier, Professor of Hebrew at the University of Ohio, notes how ‘signs’ (used predominantly of the Mosaic ‘ten plagues of Egypt’ event of the Exodus) sometimes connotes events that are not actually supernatural (or directly miraculous). For example, some scholars recognise that it is likely that in the Old Testament, Pharaoh's magicians (Exodus 7-8) imitated some of the various ‘signs’ through simple trickery or sleight of hand as exemplified in the changing of the staff into a serpent (7.10-12).⁵⁷ Acts of illusion might dazzle an ancient Egyptian audience entrenched in

miraculous work is a divine witness to God's power and truth, if the demons whose whole will is diverted to evil, were to receive the power to work miracles, God would vouch for their falsehood, which is repugnant to his goodness. Hence at times they perform by God's permission only such works as seem miraculous to men, and which are within the limits of their natural power' (ibid.).

⁵⁶ The performance of such ‘signs and wonders’ immediately brings to mind Jesus' warnings in Matthew 24.24 in his discourse about ‘false Christs and false prophets’; John would later make the direct connection with the antichrist figure in Revelation 19.20 (presumably the false prophet refers to the same figure as John's descriptions in I John 2.18 and 4.3). Contextually, the ‘antichrist’ refers to (or typologically invokes) at least one of the persecuting Roman emperors of the day (most likely Nero). Though the antichrist clearly comes in the power and mantle of Satan, he is (likely) a human and not Satan himself. This would accord with Jesus' description of the ‘abomination of desolation’ (Matthew 24.15) who will iconoclastically persecute the followers of Christ. Other interpretations of ‘antichrist’ also fail to be associated with unembodied spirits (see Bernard McGinn, *Antichrist: Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999)).

⁵⁷ See Ross G. Murison, ‘The Serpent in the Old Testament’, *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures*, 21 (1905), p. 122 and n. 23; Davidson, Stibbs, and Kevan, *The New Bible Commentary*, p. 112. The

folklore, but such acts would lack any actual supernatural aetiology. Thus, as Meier points out regarding the general nomenclature of 'signs', the

'sign' (&ô)t need not be extraordinary, and indeed it can be a predictable phenomenon that one expects with regularity [...]. [T]hese [miraculous] instances [of 'wonder'] indicate that this is not its only or even primary focus. Instead, a 'wonder' (*môpēt*) remains primarily an unusual portent accompanying the disruption of the status quo.⁵⁸

Canonical support for this can be found in Isaiah 8.18's declaration that Isaiah himself and his children serve as 'signs' in themselves: 'Behold, I and the children whom the LORD has given me are *for signs and wonders* in Israel from the LORD of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion.'⁵⁹

Surely no supernatural element is intended here. Equally benign, King Nebuchadnezzar

notion of trickery is not a recent suggestion in an attempt at responding to worries about demonological sorcery being a cause of the magicians' power, but is a suggestion dating back to Josephus (*Antiquities of the Jews* II. 13. 3) who makes no such connection between the magicians and demonology. In the response to Moses by Pharaoh's magicians, they first imitate the staff-to-serpent miracle. That this event deflates the Mosaic display is rather evident, and it may have to do with the fact that some cobras, when held appropriately at the neck, will straighten and remain still (and would appear staff-like). This would account for the illusion of the magician's staff seemingly turning into a serpent without the aid of any supernatural psychokinetic power. But, as some have pointed out, the details of the story are not generally consistent with the ancient occurrences of snake charming (e.g. Benno Jacob, *The Second Book of the Bible: Exodus*, tr. by Walter Jacob and Yaakov Elman (Jersey City, NJ: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1992), p. 254; Walton, Matthews, and Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, p. 82). It is no insignificant point if one interprets the magicians' activities to be supernatural since it is generally assumed that such counterfeit miracles would surely be the work of demons as evidenced by the 'witch craze' of the early modern period. As Dónal P. O'Mathúna writes, 'Divination and magic are dangerous because they bring people into contact with evil spiritual beings and forces' and that the magicians' activities, among others, exemplify 'that these powers can be harnessed'. 'Divination, Magic', *Dictionary of the Old Testament Pentateuch*, ed. by T. Desmond Alexander and David Baker (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), p. 196.

⁵⁸ Samuel Meier, 'Signs and Wonders', *Dictionary of the Old Testament Pentateuch*, p. 757.

⁵⁹ Emphasis mine.

personally reflects on the 'signs and wonders' God has done for him through the prophet Daniel when he proclaims:

It has seemed good to me to declare *the signs and wonders* which the Most High God has done for me. How great are His signs, And how mighty are His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And His dominion is from generation to generation.⁶⁰

But, one might argue, some translations (like the New International Version) in II Thessalonians 2.9 add 'miracles' to the 'signs and wonders' couplet. This gives the impression that even after analysing the bald usage of 'signs and wonders' as something not necessarily supernatural, the fact that 'miracles' is deliberately added might make the supernatural dimension of this power all the more evident. But the Greek word translated 'miracles' in the New International Version here is *dynamei* which just simply means *ability* or *power*.⁶¹ It is a term that is already more accurately reflected in the other translations in its being phrased as 'power and signs and false wonders' rather than as a miracle proper. The interpretation here in II Thessalonians, it seems to me, is best understood as a flagrant and direct play on the miracles of Moses and Jesus. But just as the magicians of Pharaoh's court (as well as the actions of antichrist noted in Matthew 24) are not necessarily conjuring truly supernatural counter-miracles, neither should we think that Paul had in mind supernatural psychokinesis in II Thessalonians 2.8-9. I should add that the very description of such wonders as 'false'

⁶⁰ Daniel 4.2-3; emphasis mine.

⁶¹ Friberg, Friberg, and Miller, *Analytical Lexicon*, p. 121.

(*pseudous*) perhaps is meant to underscore the very *lack* of any supernatural dimension one might affix to the miracles of the 'lawless one', to wit, that they are anything other than supernatural. As Mortimer Adler aptly summarises of the good angels, 'they cannot produce miracles. Only God can do that.'⁶² How much less the demons?

It could be pointed out that the additional 'signs and wonders' subsequently produced by the magicians in counterfeiting Yahweh's power through Moses may not be so easily brushed as clever acts of chicanery. We are told in Exodus 7.20 – 8.7 that the magicians also counterfeited the turning of the Nile into blood and the bringing of frogs onto the land of Egypt. If these events are indeed to be construed as supernatural events, I do not believe we are committed to thinking that these are acts of Satan or his demons. According to a suggestion by Scott Noegel, the magicians' acts may be an extension of *God's* doing.⁶³ It could be, he says, that the magicians imitate the Mosaic plagues and so unwittingly 'conjure more bloody water and more frogs, and thus, assist Moses in his plight.'⁶⁴ But lest the magicians be seen as equally endorsed by God, the miracles of God end up embarrassing the magicians and eventually the miracles performed by Moses precipitate an act of (temporary) repentance by Pharaoh. The magicians just unwittingly become the instruments of God's will for increasing such calamity and get humiliated in the process – a double-edged sword if ever there was one!

It is, therefore, unjustified to think that II Thessalonians 2 is a datum of Satan's abilities to manipulate physical objects in creation considering the elusive nature of what 'signs and wonders' are and that there is no unambiguous precedent in the Bible. And if it is inconclusive

⁶² Mortimer Adler, *The Angels and Us* (New York: Macmillan, 1982), p. 74.

⁶³ Scott B. Noegel, 'Moses and Magic: Notes on the Book of Exodus', *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society*, 24 (1996), pp. 48-49.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

to say that II Thessalonians 2 does not show such interaction, then we have even less reason to think that Satan and the demons utilise PK.

9.3 Conclusion

I have proposed and responded to several objections against ECI (some of which also supported demonic PK*). In the first category of objections, the philosophical ones, I defended ECI from conceptual challenges associated with it. I then proceeded to address those objections based on biblical passages that appear to be inexplicable if demons act *only* through CI – passages that fault Satan and the demons for causing certain illnesses or performing ‘signs and wonders’ in nature. I argued that all of these instances can readily be explained by ECI, and so the notion that demons directly interact with nature is not implied by any of those passages. This means that the demons, for all we know, are never explicitly or implicitly reported to have any sort of PK* ability that would allow them direct physical interaction with the material world. Now, I would say that this is the sort of conclusion we should expect of Satan if ECI is true. Thus, we have a rather defensible view of demonic agency according to ECI. While this is not an open-and-shut case, I hope to have shown that there are no good objections that would lead one to think that Satan and the demons, in how they interact with the physical world, have anything other than CI at their disposal.

In the next and final chapter, I shall tie together and summarise the threads of the running arguments of this thesis leading to the conclusion that demons are probably purely immaterial creatures and that their interaction with this world is exclusively through their cognitive interactions with human beings. In other words, I shall summarise why my overall

theory (psychodynamic immaterialism) is the best explanation for understanding both the ontology and operations of the demons.

CHAPTER 10:

CONCLUDING SUMMARY AND THE FUTURE OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF DEMONOLOGY

10.1 A Summary of the Problem

The history of Christian philosophy has been riddled with diverse and conflicting views about the nature of Satan and the demons. From its earliest stages in the first century, Christian philosophers (like Justin Martyr, Origen, Tertullian, and Augustine) had incorporated antecedent Greek views about the *daimon* in which such beings are said to be ‘spiritual’ and ‘incorporeal’ but, at the same time, ‘aerial’ or ‘ethereal’ (see Chapter 2). When cashed out, the Patristic and medieval understanding of ‘spirit’ in reference to demons pertained to their having a quasi-material nature that is composed of an imperceptible substance. That an aerial constitution might be literally condensable to a physical state observable to percipients may have been motivated by the need to explain how Satan and the demons interact with the physical world in the ways the Bible reports. As such, the Greek understanding was quite a convenient and accommodating theory. Other Christian philosophers later in history (i.e. Pseudo-Dionysius, *probably* Thomas Aquinas, Peter Kreeft, and Peter Williams) have opted for a pure immaterialism – that Satan and the demons are ‘spirit’ every bit as much as God and the angels are. But in and of itself, this ontology does not offer any explanation as to how Satan and the demons interact with the physical world. Such philosophical demonologies, whether from the Patristic, medieval, modern, or contemporary periods, often added a special psychokinetic power (PK*) to their repertoire, such that demons would be able to directly

interact with the world in a way analogous to how human souls (on anthropological dualism) interact with their bodies.

There are flaws in each of these views. Quasi-materialism seems to deviate from the usual biblical (and more uniform) sense of 'spirit' by making it heterogeneous. It adds to the notion of a spirit a secondary, hybrid meaning that forces 'immaterial' to be 'material' at the same time. As such, it makes little sense in elucidating what it means to be a spirit at all. For those repulsed by this apparent incoherence, one may be driven instead to the univocal notion set forth in pure immaterialism. But here, one struggles to explain how created immaterial agents can interact with a physical world. Such a view presumably requires that a PK* power be added to the demons' capabilities after all. However, such an auxiliary hypothesis seems uncomfortably *ad hoc* since it mysteriously affixes an additional power to the demons without any careful thought as to whether or not demons even directly interact with the world and how this might be accomplished apart from God's intervention. That demons would appear to be causally effective in both the material and immaterial worlds is what makes quasi-materialism attractive. And what makes the notion of 'spirit' more uniform in its understanding is the appeal of pure immaterialism. But neither view is without its challenges. Either we are unable to adequately explain the immateriality of the demons in a coherent way or we are unable to explain their interaction with the world.

10.2 A Summary of the Solution

By contrast to the inadequacies of the known theories, I have offered a theory that is free of any of these challenges by adopting the pure immaterialist view with some important

modifications (see Chapter 3). That is, I posited the view that demons are purely immaterial, a view which avoids any unnecessary ambiguity over 'spirit' and conforms to a *prima facie* reading of the biblical descriptions of the demons. I argued for this by showing how such an ontology is *possible* (see Chapter 4) and has no conceptual disadvantages over rival theories. I then argued in favour of the theory by providing and defending specific evidences for it and indicating why it is the best explanation of all of those evidences over materialist and quasi-materialist alternatives (see Chapter 5). In doing so, I initially laid out three pieces of evidence on which my cumulative argument would be based. The first is that the Bible seems *prima facie* dualistic. The second is that the description of the ontological status of angels and demons (as *rû^{ah}* and *pneuma*) is the same as that of God. The third is that there is a disproportionate set of manifestation stories in that angels manifest frequently in extramental ways but demons never do. Based on those evidences, I argued that pure immaterialism is more parsimonious than (quasi-) materialism and that it also enjoys consilience with philosophical and theological expectations. As such, I concluded, pure immaterialism is the best explanation of the demons' ontology. In the next chapter, Chapter 6, I addressed a number of objections that might be posed and found no good reason to reject the hypothesis of pure immaterialism.

I then proposed that any activity of Satan and the demons in the world can be adequately explained by their basic power of cognitive interaction (CI), a claim elucidated in Chapter 3. Specifically, I proposed that perhaps demons *exclusively* act in this world via their cognitive interaction with embodied minds, viz. human beings (ECI). Such activity, then, only obtains by their utilising human cognition to manipulate the bodies of those humans and the environment of which they are a part. In Chapter 7, I argued for the coherence of this notion

and that there is no reason to think that souls cannot be causally related to other souls, whether those other souls be embodied or not. I then argued that there are particular pieces of evidence that imply ECI (see Chapter 8). The first is that the Bible offers *a posteriori* support for cognitive interaction. The second is that the good angels' apparent creative products are likely a result of God's causal intervention rather than of a psychokinetic power inherent to them. And the third is that the prospect of a creative power to generate diseases and perform miracles is without precedent and inappropriately attributes divine powers to demons. I then argued that when all of those evidences are taken together, the best explanation of demonic activity in the world is ECI rather than PK*. I then followed those discussions by addressing a number of objections that could be raised against ECI and found no good reasons to reject it (see Chapter 9).

When I originally gave an overview of both of these constituent theories (pure immaterialism and ECI) in Chapter 3, I consolidated both of them into one overarching theory that I call *psychodynamic immaterialism*. Since the overwhelming majority of believers in demons since Pseudo-Dionysius have affirmed that demons are purely immaterial, it is unsurprising that the crucial rival to psychodynamic immaterialism, then, is *psychokinetic immaterialism*. Why? Because, on the back of pure immaterialism, it provides an explanation of how purely immaterial demons can interact with the world (viz. PK*). Since my inductive arguments for psychodynamic immaterialism fair better than those for psychokinetic immaterialism, then psychodynamic immaterialism is the more reasonable of the two. And if psychodynamic immaterialism stands vindicated, then Christian philosophers have a coherent philosophy of demonology with which to understand the ontology of demons and their mode

of operation. For the first time in the history of the philosophy of demonology, we have a theory that is free from the tensions found in the traditional theories of demonology. And we also have a better understanding of the extent and general nature of the power of intermediary beings.

In the next section, I will address the various contexts where ongoing studies in the philosophy of demonology in general, but of this theory in particular, can go. In the following we shall see that such a research programme can help elucidate philosophical, theological, and even practical matters vis-à-vis belief in demons.

10.3 The Future of Research in the Philosophy of Demonology

The longstanding effort to understand demons does not end with an argument for understanding their metaphysics. Rather, the implications of considering a fuller philosophy of demonology, which begins with psychodynamic immaterialism in particular, directly impacts other areas of study. In this section, I shall briefly explore what areas of study are directly impacted and those that are touched upon. It seems to me that the way in which philosophical discussions about God have precipitated various discussions in the philosophy of religion is bound to be repeated in future developments in the philosophy of demonology that also begins with a discussion about demons. Let us take a brief tour of the potential areas of impact in developing a philosophy of demonology informed by psychodynamic immaterialism.

10.3.1 Diabolical Theodicies

If it should turn out that the demons are purely immaterial and that they are incapable of interacting with the world directly, then there are implications for certain theodicies and defences of God's existence that are posited. For example, some philosophers have followed Augustine in offering up a defence of God's existence that shifts the blame for natural evils (evils that are thought to be independent of human activity such as atmospheric and earthly disturbances, physical maladies, illnesses, and animal suffering) from God to human beings. The Augustinian solution roots the blame for natural evil specifically on Adam and Eve's disobedience to God in the Garden of Eden which, then, prompted God's curse of creation. But this solution is increasingly difficult to defend thanks to the paleontological evidence for death, disease, and decay in the animal kingdom prior to the arrival of human beings.

As a result, philosophers have turned to a possible pre-Adamic circumstance that would explain the existence of such evils that clearly arose prior to the arrival of human beings. Since the Adam and Eve story contains at least one pre-existing malevolent intelligence prior to the Fall (viz. Satan), it is natural for Christian philosophers to appeal to Satan and his demons as likely candidates for natural evil's origin.¹ But this notion will require that demons (or at least Satan) have some ability to interact with the physical universe, an ability with which they can disrupt the tranquillity and harmony of God's creation. If it should turn out that demons are

¹ See Michael Murray, *Nature Red in Tooth & Claw* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 103-106; Gregory Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil: Constructing a Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), pp. 293-318; Stewart E. Kelly, 'The Problem of Evil and the Satan Hypothesis', *Sophia: International Journal for Philosophy of Religion, Metaphysical Theology and Ethics*, 36 (1997), pp. 29-42; Terence Penelhum, *Religion and Rationality: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Random House, 1971), p. 246; C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: Macmillan, 1962), Chapter 9; E. L. Mascall, *Christian Theology and Natural Science: Some Questions on their Relations* (New York: Ronald, 1956), pp. 301-302; Dom I. Trethowan, *An Essay in Christian Philosophy* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1954), p. 128.

incapable of such feats, any theodicy that utilises demons in this way would be undermined.² As such, psychodynamic immaterialism would essentially make diabolical theodicies implausible.

In the next section, I shall consider a sensitive issue in the philosophy of the cognitive sciences: the notion of demonic possession.

10.3.2 Psychiatry, Demonic Possession, and Philosophy of the Cognitive Sciences

The phenomenon of demonic possession, we are often told, is supposed to be a prescientific (mis)understanding of mental disorders.³ This is to say that all of the alleged demonic possessions of antiquity were actually an aggregate of misdiagnoses of various human behaviours that are now better understood in the light of the modern cognitive sciences like psychology and psychiatry. Appeals to demons as causes for certain erratic and disturbing human behaviours is construed to be about as appropriate as blaming Thor for the occurrences of thunderstorms. And this is a separate concern from that of the adverse *cultural* effects of diagnosing people with demonic possession. In some geographical pockets in human history, such as the infamous Salem Village in Massachusetts of colonial North America during the seventeenth century, superstition had given rise to brutality. As the story goes, some in the

² Such a view would be undermined *even if* the demons were originally embodied creatures who resided in a pre-Edenic landscape that was later destroyed, leaving the demons in a permanently disembodied state (this pre-Edenic view is defended by Boyd; see his *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, pp. 310-317). Being material or corporeal does not guarantee the ability to perform physically impossible or supernatural feats of wonder. The demonological realist, if he is going to affirm this theodicy, cannot afford to disavow the demons' ability to directly interact with the physical world in this special way.

³ Emmanouil Magiorkinis, Kalliopi Sidiropoulou, and Aristidis Diamantis, 'Hallmarks in the history of epilepsy: Epilepsy in antiquity', *Epilepsy & Behavior*, 17 (2010), pp. 103–108; E. L. Loschen, 'Psychiatry and Religion: A Variable History', *Journal of Religion and Health*, 13 (1974), pp. 137-141; Purushottam Joshi, 'Mental Health in a Historical Perspective', *Annales Médico-Psychologiques*, 1 (1971), pp. 185-214.

community of Salem believed that some of its residents were witches possessed and empowered by demons.⁴ Such beliefs derived from Europe as exemplified in such works as *Malleus Maleficarum* (1487) by Heinrich Krama, a German clergyman of the Catholic Church. Krama overtly blamed the Devil for being the empowering force behind the supernatural tendencies of the witch.

The close association of superstition with demonisation undoubtedly contributed to the motive to separate the 'natural causes' of disorders from the diabolical ones. Moreover, and most importantly, a moment's reflection about the symptoms of clinical demonic possession cases leads one to think that alleged demonic possessions are (by and large) better explained as conditions of *schizophrenia* or manifesting episodes of *dissociative identity disorder* (formerly known as *multiple personality disorder*). Indeed, on the presumption that current demonic possession cases are best understood as episodes of cognitive or mental disorders of a certain kind, treatments of these cases have been overall – so the perception goes – more ameliorating for the patients than an exorcism. In other words, on the probability that such symptoms are the results of ordinarily classified disorders, a prognosis based on something like dissociative transitive disorder or schizophrenia or some other mainstream disorder has led to more rehabilitative success in treating victims.

Ever since the Enlightenment, demonology has been seen as a superstition – a relic of intellectually underdeveloped cultures. Consequently, the prospect of demonic possession as a diagnosis has fallen out of favour in the West. The result is that the notion of spirit possession as a genuine phenomenon is outright perceived as unreasonable – a vestige of a superstitious

⁴ See K. David Gross, *The Salem Witch Trials* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2008).

culture long overcome. And since treating certain symptomatic behaviour as a mental disorder seems to have made such conditions more amenable to mainstream care (e.g. medication), and perhaps far less stigmatising than being the innocent victim of an otherworldly kidnapping, it is no surprise that demons are no longer seen as real entities that contribute to the erratic behaviour that is generally classified as ‘possession cases.’⁵

While we should always prefer, in principle, a more naturalistic interpretation of the cause of some event (i.e. a preference for the natural in the absence of any mitigating evidence to the contrary), it is unclear that any mental disorder pathology does the explanatory job that is assumed of it. When someone is diagnosed with, say, dissociative identity disorder, it sounds technical enough to the uninformed to give the impression that we have a known neurological aetiology with which to engage and potentially cure as if it were a concise medical diagnosis. Just what is the explanation for someone’s suspected dissociative behaviour? Presumably, it is because the person is suffering from dissociative identity disorder. But what is *that*? It is *not* a cause.⁶ According to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (fifth edition), a dissociative identity disorder is a

[d]isruption of identity characterized by two or more distinct
personality states, which may be described in some cultures as an
experience of possession. The disruption in identity involves

⁵ Psychiatry has retained the appellation ‘possession cases’ in the literature, not to legitimise it as a diagnosis of demonic harassment but to refer to the phenomenal aspects associated with the perception of such affliction. It would be similar to using the appellation ‘UFO abduction cases’ which would not necessarily commit one to acknowledging actual alien abductions. It would only refer to the *experience* of feeling abducted by an alien oppressor.

⁶ As emphasised by Thomas S. Szasz, mental illness in general ‘is not literally a “thing”’ (‘The Myth of Mental Illness’, *Perspectives in Abnormal Behavior*, ed. by Richard J. Morris (New York: Pergamon, 1974), p. 4).

marked discontinuity in sense of self and sense of agency, accompanied by related alterations in affect, behavior, consciousness, memory, perception, cognition, and/or sensory-motor functioning. These signs and symptoms may be observed by others or reported by the individual.⁷

What is notably lacking in this description is reference to any explanation whatsoever. If one were to say that one is suffering not from demonic possession but from dissociative identity disorder, it would not be an attempt to relocate the cause of one's condition to some naturalistic aetiology. No doubt this is how the diagnosis will be read by those who believe demons do not exist, but it should be clear that no causal pathway is being directly traced here. Rather, such a diagnosis merely describes a family of relevant symptoms exhibited by the patient. In fact, many cognitive scientists hesitate even to speak of causation at all in classifying mental disorders, for it is often controversial as to whether there even exist sufficient and necessary conditions for some putative disorder. Philosopher of cognitive science George Graham says that 'there are no successful causal explanations of (exemplary) mental disorders that cite a single main cause or a final common pathway for their pathogeneses.'⁸ Thus, the causes of mental disorders are hotly disputed in the literature and, contrary to the hopes of those sceptical of demonic possession, do not lead one away from the possibility of demonic possession. One might insist that demons are not ever to blame in any dissociative identity

⁷ *DSM-V* (Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Association, 2013), p. 292.

⁸ George Graham, *The Disordered Mind: An Introduction to Philosophy of Mind and Mental Illness*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 55.

disorders, but this amounts to nothing more than a misreading of what the *DSM* itself actually says when it only observes that the condition ‘may be described in some cultures as an experience of possession.’ That this is how some cultures may describe it hardly counts as a refutation of its being a genuine possession case. By signalling a ‘disruption in identity’ it leaves open to interpretation what the cause may be in a, quite frankly, spiritual-friendly manner! As Graham explains, the *DSM* has been known to ‘[classify] disorders through the description of syndromes or syndromal clusters [...] quite regardless of surmises about possible underlying or antecedent proximate causes.’⁹ I say all of this to emphasise that psychologists and psychiatrists have not somehow *solved* the mystery of so-called possession cases, they have merely *categorised* it according to a ‘cluster’ of symptoms.

But if so-called possession cases are not fully and universally explicated by appeals to known mental disorders, then the rejection of demonic possession as a viable option in at least some cases smacks of prejudice against the supernatural. Yet if demons do exist and psychodynamic immaterialism is a fact of their existence, we really should have another look at possession cases through this framework. For one, we should not expect that demons can be detected lurking in the temporal lobe or hypothalamus somewhere, for demons would not have spatial properties. Nor would their control over the host be obvious since they act, in many cases, subliminally.¹⁰ The occurrences of demonic CI in the Bible do not always make it clear to the victim who is responsible. For example, if we revisit the episode of Job, it is apparent that Job thought *God* was solely responsible for his maladies!¹¹ The Apostle Peter had

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

¹⁰ See Chapter 3, Section 3.5.3.

¹¹ Job 12.9; 16.7-9; 23.16; 27.2; 30.11, 19-23.

no idea his passion to protect Jesus from suffering *was motivated by Satan!*¹² As such, there is no reason or theological expectation to think that the demonic aetiology of any genuine possession case could be identified. Moreover, the superstitious elements of magic and spells would never again be confused with patients suspected of possession since, on this theory, demons would be incapable of disturbing the natural order or performing any extraordinary feats like levitation, curses, or any other kind of extramental magical extravagance. Thus, any pretence to magical behaviour such as that found in the lore of witchcraft would be quashed *ex hypothesi*. One final point can be made. It may be that we have been looking at this all wrong. Why suppose that a diagnosis is to be predicated on *either* some natural pathology or some spiritual one? If a patient was inflicted with urticaria (i.e. the formation of hives on the skin), it would be 'urticaria' sure enough. In some cases of urticaria, the condition is known to be caused by emotional stress. But this does not mean that there is no supernatural aetiology. Regardless of whether or not that stress were induced by a supernatural agent is obviously not to say that the condition is *not* urticaria, only that its being urticaria has an immediate cause. I suspect whether there was a known supernatural aetiology behind the stress or not a patient would still engage in some form of stress management. But this treatment does not amount to either a denial of the presence of stress or a supernatural cause. Dissociative identity disorder and demonic possession strike me as fulfilling the same analogous pattern in terms of symptom treatment; but then, this is not to look at one's condition as an *either-or* but rather as a *both-and*.

¹² Matthew 16.21-23.

And this leads to one final point. The remedy for some particular possession case may or may not be handled with an exorcism. There is more harmony than division when it comes to treating all possession cases with concomitant symptoms. To return to my analogy, that is, whether one is suffering from tonsillitis or streptococcus, the initial onset of symptoms will likely be handled with hot tea, chicken broth, and plenty of water. Despite its aetiology, one may successfully overcome the condition by waiting it out without ever having to expel the cause directly. The same might be said of demonic possession understood as a dramatic exemplification of the CI-relation. One could treat the symptoms through conventional means if it means finding relief. This would not be to deny a demonic presence. For if it works, it matters not whether the cause was diabolical or natural. As philosopher and religious studies professor Stafford Betty comments:

[I]t is not at all ludicrous to consider the possibility that drugs and ECT [electroconvulsive therapy] might inhibit spirit oppression or possession. Is it really so preposterous that a spirit utilizing in some mysterious way a person's body, more particularly [the] brain, should be disturbed or even uprooted when that body with its brain is subjected to a shock as violent as ECT?¹³

On psychodynamic immaterialism, this is certainly a possibility. And this would lead both psychiatrist and priest to consider more conventional steps to begin with, and these then

¹³ L. Stafford Betty, 'The Growing Evidence for "Demonic Possession": What Should Psychiatry's Response be?', *Journal of Religion and Health*, 44 (2005), p. 21.

followed by, if necessary, the expulsion tactics of exorcists. If the symptoms are unmanageable, attacking the cause would be a natural follow-up. When I think about how one might assess whether one's condition is demonically induced or not, I find this to be a corollary of a much larger debate in the philosophy of religion. Specifically, this kind of thinking leads us to ponder *another kind of intelligent design debate*. In other words, if we are assessing whether one is being manipulated or harassed by a malevolent spirit, it is indeed a matter of detecting whether a transcendent intelligence is at work – very much analogous to teleological and/or design arguments for God's existence. All in all, considering all options on the table affords us a more holistic approach devoid of unnecessary prejudice and bias that allows us to be compassionate enough to expand our means to heal.

In the next subsection, I shall consider another area of thought that a philosophy of demonology, particularly the one I have defended, can inform our understanding of the popular notion of so-called paranormal phenomena.

10.3.3 The Metaphysics of Demons and Paranormal Phenomena

Paranormal activity refers to a set of phenomenal (perceptible) experiences resulting from the manifestations of disembodied spirits in the physical world.¹⁴ Such manifestations can be visual (apparitions), audible (voice phenomena), tactile (scratches and chills), or some combination thereof. Such phenomena could be as dramatic as a UFO visitation which is

¹⁴ Some activity deemed to be paranormal may have nothing to do with things like disembodied spirits but could be due to natural causes that are undetectable through ordinary, scientific means.

thought by some to be a category of demonic manifestations.¹⁵ The naturalist obviously proposes that any supernatural interpretation of alleged paranormal activity is altogether wrong-headed or outright incorrect. As with demonic possession cases, it is also a mainstay in our post-Enlightenment culture to have principled, *a priori* resistance to favouring explanations rooted in the supernatural. Since these sceptics have an aversion to *any* supernaturally-based hypothesis, their survey of the evidence of such phenomena is vitiated.

Yet many in the Judeo-Christian hold that paranormal activity is in fact due to the mischievous and deceptive behaviour of Satan and/or the demons.¹⁶ While one could always defend the naturalist's contention that such activity is not paranormal at all, one may integrate psychodynamic immaterialism in the way I did in accounting for alleged extramental manifestations (see Chapter 6, Section 6.2). I offered up a view I called *psycho-projection* which holds that demons truly do precipitate such paranormal phenomena but not as an extramental reality. Instead, they somehow induce the human mind to project or hallucinate an apparition or some phenomenal experience, giving the false impression that the source of the phenomenon is external to the percipient. It is a version of a hypothesis offered up elsewhere in the literature on paranormal activity.¹⁷

Such a view would have quite an impact in legitimising the testimony of some who experience such phenomena while denying that demons have any powers to interact directly

¹⁵ See Christopher Partridge, 'Alien Demonology: the Christian Roots of the Malevolent Extraterrestrial in UFO Religions and Abduction Spiritualities', *Religion*, 34 (2004), pp. 163-189.

¹⁶ This is a view that was primarily, though not exclusively, espoused by the early Protestant Reformers of Christianity. See Jeffrey Burton Russell, *The Prince of Darkness: Radical Evil and the Power of Good in History* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. 167 – 185; id., *Mephistopheles: the Devil in the Modern World* (NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), pp. 25-76.

¹⁷ See Hilary Evans, 'The Ghost Experience in a Wider Context', *Hauntings and Poltergeists: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. by James Houran and Rense Lange (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2001), pp. 58-59; David H. Lund, *Death and Consciousness* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1985), Chapter 10.

with the physical world. If ECI is true, then there is no reason to suppose that the experience is a fabrication or misunderstanding of the phenomenal evidence. Instead, one may suppose the experience to be real but defined in such a way that is consistent with a demonology that affirms the demons' ability to deceive in such ways. Needless to say, much more could be said about this.

Let us now take a look at how a philosophy of demonology can also help the Christian theologian who seeks to engage in systematic theology.

10.3.4 Philosophical Theology

Psychodynamic immaterialism will aid the theologian in her craft, too. If we understand that there are no exegetical reasons to prefer any one interpretation over another when it comes to passages that speak of demonic interaction, perhaps by re-looking at those passages under the assumption that PK* is not warranted may lead to a more elegant understanding of those passages in question. For example, if the serpent in the Garden of Eden with Eve was not a physical manifestation of Satan, one wonders what the serpent was. This I have not answered. However, the theologian could revisit this question with the psychodynamic immaterialist framework in mind. If the serpent does not describe the *physical* attributes of the villain in the Garden, than just what does it describe? Moreover, what do we do with the conclusion of the account in which God proclaims to the serpent, 'Cursed are you more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly shall you go, And dust shall you eat All the days of your life' (Genesis 3.14) if the serpent who beguiled Eve is no 'beast of the field' at all? Would we have a richer picture of the serpent or a more convoluted one?

If one wants to maintain a conservative interpretation of the events depicted therein, the conservative theologian could develop a hypothesis that makes elegant all of the data mined from Genesis 3 in attempting to identify the serpent. The serpent actively tempts Eve and is the object of God's curse at the conclusion of the Fall. So, how can a genuinely immaterial spirit incite one to fall from grace and, yet, be described in animalistic terms? Given psychodynamic immaterialism, one may be lead to consider seriously the idea that the author(s) of Genesis 3 are using 'serpent' as a way to describe the *disposition* of the villain. Perhaps its use patterns modern expressions such as one's being 'wise/crafty as a serpent' or of one 'slithering' out of a situation. This is in solidarity with modern designations of adversaries caricatured by familiar animal expressions such as 'John is a real snake for swindling me like that!' and 'I can't believe you dated that rat!' Such idioms invoking snakes and rats are meant to describe the behavioural traits of the person, not their ontology. This would allow the theologian to see differently verse 3's mentioning that 'the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field' because it would not be a reference to the serpent *as* a beast of the field but that his *characteristics* are those of this beast of the field. And given that a serpent *already* traverses 'on [its] belly' forces the theologian to find a better interpretation of God's curse than a morphological change in the serpent that is really no change at all. In short, the account can be both literal and symbolic at the same time. Literal with respect to there being a real villain tempting Eve and symbolic with respect to how the villain is described. In short, it would play to the strengths of both a liberal and conservative outlook without abandoning the notion that Satan literally tempted Eve in the Garden.

Now, this is just one way that psychodynamic immaterialism may allow us to see familiar passages in a different light. It may be that the intent of the author(s) of Genesis has been mired in unnecessary controversy over the fantastic portrait of a talking snake. And, at the same time, one is not forced to think of Genesis as echoing some kind of fable with its talking serpent. But I can only leave it to the theologian to improve upon this suggestion – a suggestion that becomes more palpable on a reading of the passage through the eyes of psychodynamic immaterialism.

Systematic theology is not the only theological benefit of the kind of philosophy of demonology I have championed. Practitioners of Christian theology can also find practical applications of such a theory. Let us take a look now at such a possibility.

10.3.5 Practical Theology

Practitioners of the Christian faith are obliged to interact with and even combat the nuisances of demons in a way that respects God's prescribed solutions. This kind of interaction with demons is often described as the Christian's call to *spiritual warfare*. While the means of spiritual warfare are delineated in various passages of the New Testament, clarity of such prescriptions are often muddled by misconceptions about what demons putatively can and cannot do. It is the case that a deep, exegetical analysis can be a benefit in elucidating such prescriptions, but any exegesis of those passages will require an interpretive framework by which to make the best sense of their practice. To see why, consider a mundane analogy in the commandment that 'you shall not commit adultery' (Exodus 20.14). In order to understand the command, one must obviously have a working knowledge of the necessary and sufficient

conditions for adultery. Concerning the prescriptions of spiritual warfare offered to Christian believers, readers are told to '[r]esist the devil, and he will flee' (James 4.7), to 'not be outwitted by Satan' (II Corinthians 2.22), and to 'stand against the schemes of the devil' (Ephesians 6.11). Unfortunately, even knowing what 'resist', 'not be outwitted', and 'stand' mean, the reader is left with a rather vague notion of defence against the diabolical. How does one practice these prescriptions?

A philosophy of demonology, such as the one I have defended, can allow both the theologian and layperson to understand more specifically what these could mean in practice. Let us just take the example of 'resist' as a case study. Would resisting the Devil be like resisting an assault by another human being (cf. Matthew 5.39), viz. as a sort of physical parry? As a matter of historical import, some ancient texts on magic instructed the demonically harassed to utilise incantations with which to make demons flee.¹⁸ So, why *not* think that this is one of chasing away the Devil with a clever use of verbal magic given such a general cultural context? Once a philosophy of demonology as the one I have championed is adopted, it makes the prescription more illuminating and insightful. After all, if demons are purely immaterial creatures, then they simply cannot *hear* an incantation for they would lack ear drums. Pure immaterialism positions the reader to consider an alternative meaning, perhaps one that ends up being more faithful to the context of the fourth chapter of James itself (viz. that it is incumbent upon the Christian to change her ways). Craig Keener explains that, in James' context, 'the idea here is moral, not magical. One must choose between the values of God and

¹⁸ See Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), p. 699.

those of the world.’¹⁹ Resistance is, therefore, best understood as a *refusal* – a refusal to give in to the Devil’s temptations. The verse now comes across less as a mysterious magical parry and more as a call for a virtuous submission to God in resisting the vicious entrapment of Satan. Given the surrounding verses, it is clear that this is a far more coherent fit for the chapter. And given psychodynamic immaterialism, it is no surprise that a proper interpretation centres on the contrast between virtue and vice as opposed to magic. Accordingly, psychodynamic immaterialism continues to help Christians to demythologise their theology against the superstitions of the ancient world.

There are many verses in the New Testament that could be made more insightful and shown to make the most sense of the entire corpus of spiritual warfare passages. But that will have to be a project for another day. We now have come to the end of a research programme that has much to its credit, not only in terms of its philosophical attraction, but in its widespread application. As such, psychodynamic immaterialism not only accounts for the metaphysics of demons but also, by extension, promotes much-needed further thinking in Christian demonology.

10.4 Conclusion

Having surveyed the history of Christian philosophy in order to better understand a consistent message of the metaphysics of demons, such a survey has brought to light more problems and challenges that have gone unaddressed. As such, history has bequeathed to the present-day philosopher of demonology a real need to posit and clarify a theory that best

¹⁹ Ibid.

explains all of the data on the demons. I have argued that psychodynamic immaterialism accomplishes this and much more. And it is this theory that goes on to have many positive implications for further studies in the philosophy of demonology.

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