

**Letter to Nereyda IV**  
Answering the question:  
How is it possible that you are your brain?

By and Based on the Books of Robert J. Cormier ([www.thefaithkit.org](http://www.thefaithkit.org))  
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# Letter to Nereyda IV

## Answering the question: How is it possible that you are your brain?

Dear Nereyda,

Like my last three letters to you, the purpose of this one is stated by its subtitle.

Like my last three letters to you, this is another attempt to explain things without lots of historical background and other information not everyone needs.

If you understood what is meant by “materialism”—that everything is made of matter and can be explained completely by the working of matter—you may have figured out that materialism means that you *are*, simply put, your brain.

For many people this idea is both obvious and confusing AT THE SAME TIME!

The idea is obvious in the sense that, of course, thinking is done in the brain—where else?!—and this is where the eyes lead, and from the brain “wires” lead to our muscles and every other part of us that we control or feels things.

The idea is confusing because the brain, after all, is a thing; it is a thing we can see and touch and drop on the floor. And this is NOT how we conceive our “thoughts” and “feelings,” and ourselves.

We are our brain—it has to be; BUT HOW CAN IT BE?

To make sense of this, let us use the example of something that we now use every day—a computer. A computer is a very complicated thing with many, many parts. Because of the way these parts work, and work with each other, information can be fed into the computer—*not* unlike the way light becomes information that enters our brain by means of our eyes—and

this kicks off a whole lot of activity within the computer, and this can result in the computer “remembering” something, and maybe selecting to do something.

Now it is true that the computer does not do anything consciously, the way we do, but this is because of the basic difference between us and any sort of machine: Computers take one step at a time. Even computers that can do many things at once are doing them one step at a time, even if these steps take place very, very quickly, and the machine is involved in more than one process at a time. Each process still takes place one step at a time. What is more, no two processes influence each other except at one point at one time. In other words, even where two or more process are involved in one complicated operation, what happens is like this: One switch moves another, which moves another, which moves another. At some point, one of these movements may initiate a sequence of moves in a second (or other) process, but this still happens at one particular point in this second (or other) process where one switch moves another.

A computer does not function “globally” where something that consists of many structures can affect *all at once* something else that consists of many structures.

But this is precisely how the brain works. The brain connects many cells to form a memory, which is itself part of a larger network of structures. Activity, electric activity, within this network is affected by surrounding structures and their activities. Thus, the activity within any one structure is “conditioned” by its surroundings just as what we do is conditioned by the temperature, humidity, etc., of the air round us.

The activity within any one structure is “conditioned” by its surroundings AND VICE-VERSA.

This happens because, NOT like a computer, the brain is “wet”—its basis in fluid allows an effect to be transmitted to many, many cell structures at once.

This alone makes a brain VASTLY more complicated than any computer can be. (And the brain has other such characteristics besides.)

Because the brain is so vastly integrated, it exists as ONE-THING which is so much more ONE-THING than a collection of switches. This ONE-THING is a person. The function of this thing is so complex the result is “experience.” If this appears mysterious, think of a mass of chemicals whose interaction generates heat which is felt throughout the mass.

Anticipating more questions:

What is thinking? Thinking is what happens when an experience or idea, i.e., a connection of structures, kicks off a process that leads to some sort of conclusion which is experienced as a new idea or even decision.

What is feeling? Feeling is the experience that follows from the brain’s analysis/reaction to something that is good for it or bad, or strikes it as beautiful, or interesting, or funny....

What is the “I” that I experience as “me?” “You” are NOT something inside your brain looking at your thoughts and feelings. You ARE your brain being the person it has become. When you are experiencing “yourself,” this happens to be what your thoughts are focused on at the moment.

What goes to heaven? Read *Christian Materialism*. You’ll see!

Dear reader,

If, perhaps, you might like to read the first, second, and third letters to Nereyda, just go to the Christian Materialism menu of [www.thefaithkit.org/panorama2](http://www.thefaithkit.org/panorama2).