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Physicalist Naturalism in the Philosophy of Mind
(far less Warranted than Usually Thought)

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Whoever has even a superficial familiarity with recent, and not so recent, philosophical debates knows that in the last few decades philosophy of mind has been dominated by physicalist naturalism, and that philosophers of mind who are willing to seriously consider the possibility that materialism might be false are still quite rare. This being the situation, it is somewhat surprising that in the philosophical literature the pro-materialist conviction often seems to float free of the defence of any specific argument in its favour. Yet, some arguments for physicalism have actually been put forward, and in this paper I examine three: the argument from the success of science, the argument from methodological naturalism, and the argument from the causal closure of the physical. They may not exhaust all that has been said to uphold physicalism in the metaphysics of mind, but they do offer, I think, a fair survey of the sorts of reasons that are given in this kind of discussion. If I am right on this point, and if I am right that the arguments I consider are weak and unconvincing, then the most popular form of naturalism concerning the mind cannot be viewed as being well backed up, contrary to what many of its supporters usually think.