

Death, Resurrection and the Continuity of Personal Identity

G. Andrew Peoples

[Abraham] is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into being what does not exist.

Romans 4:17

[I]t is... nonsensical to assert that God creates out of nothing a person that has already lived, died and completely passed out of existence.

William Hasker

Fool! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And as for what you sow, you do not sow the body that is to be, but a bare seed...

1 Corinthians 15:36-37

The man who does not know what death is cannot either know what resurrection is.

Karl Barth

Introduction

How is it that we can talk about rising from the dead? More specifically, how is it that we can talk about *ourselves experiencing* this phenomenon if we die before it occurs? For even if we believe (as Christians do) in the future event of the bodily resurrection of the dead, what basis do we have for saying that it is *us* who will experience it? Some initial clarification is needed of exactly what is being asked.

It is a given in Christian circles that there is a future life of some sort.¹ It also seems to be generally accepted that we will rise from the dead in the event of the resurrection, and that there is an element of comfort that we can find in this belief. It seems to be self-evident that we can only take comfort in the fact that we will rise from the dead if **we** will rise from the dead. It wouldn't be particularly encouraging to be told that long after we are dead and

¹ We might put this differently and say that if one *doesn't* believe in any kind of future life, one is not within Christian circles in any orthodox sense.

forgotten, somebody who bears some resemblance to us will rise from the dead on our behalf to take our place in the next life. In order to believe in a future, post-resurrection life for ourselves, we must believe that the person who rises from the dead is not only like us in an important way, but rather that this person is *numerically identical* to us.²

Philosophical anthropology asks the question “what stuff are we made of”? The basic question of philosophical anthropology is sometimes called the *mind – body problem* (also sometimes called the body – soul problem). Historically, there have been two dominating answers – dualism and monism. By far “the most influential mind-body theory in Western civilization [*sic*] is mind-body dualism.”³ In dualism, humans are seen as being composed of two basically different kinds of substance – body and soul, mind and matter. Renowned Reformed theologian Charles Hodge proclaimed substance dualism like this:

The Scriptures teach that... man consists of two distinct principles, a body and a soul: the one material, the other immaterial: the one corporeal, the other spiritual. It is involved in this statement, ***a substance distinct from the body...*** The Scriptural doctrine of the nature of man as a created spirit in vital union with an organized [*sic*] body, ***consisting therefore of two, and only two, distinct elements or substances, matter and mind,*** is... properly designated as realistic dualism [emphasis added].⁴

² Trenton Merricks explains the different ways in which we may say that a person “is the same person” as oneself in the past. He uses the example of himself at the age of one. If “person” is defined as a set of characteristics, then in many ways he is *not* the same person as he was then, as his characteristics are now radically different from a one-year-old child. Likewise we might make the comment “she is not the same person she was before she became famous” when a person who was once warm and friendly has now become distant and aloof. In other words, “the same as” is being used here to mean “having the same characteristics as.” But numerical identity is something different from this.

For instance, suppose the prosecuting attorney asks you in court whether the man being tried is the same person that you saw rob the bank. It would not do to think to yourself “well, while robbing the bank he was friendly and approachable, but now he is aloof and distant” and then answer “no.”

Trenton Merricks, “The Resurrection of the Body and the Life Everlasting,” in Murray, Michael J (ed.), *Reason for the Hope Within* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 263.

This second kind of identity is numerical identity. According to numerical identity, the woman who is now famous still exists, but she is now in possession of new characteristics. It is numerical identity that this paper is concerned with.

³ William Hasker, *Metaphysics: Constructing a Worldview*, Contours of Christian Philosophy (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1983), 65.

⁴ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.), 42, 46.

The Westminster Confession uses similar language when it speaks “on the state of men after death”:

The bodies of men, after death, return to dust, and see corruption; but their souls, which neither die nor sleep, having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them.⁵

This is also the view that prevails more or less universally in Catholic circles, although it was not formalised as magisterial dogma until the fifth Lateran Council. The view is basically “that there are both physical and non-physical substances, that you and I and all other human persons are non-physical substances, and that each human person bears some sort of intimate relation to a certain living human organism, the person’s body.”⁶ While substance dualism may vary in its exact details throughout Christendom, certain tenets are central to substance dualism proper (or at any rate, the form of dualism I am dealing with in this paper):

- Whereas bodies are material, souls are immaterial (non-physical).
- Whereas bodies die, souls do not. At death they live on independent of the body. In this respect at least, the consequences of the fall that pertain to the body do not pertain to the soul. One way of expressing this is by saying that bodies are mortal but souls are immortal.⁷

When I refer to dualism here, this is the view I am referring to.

⁵ Westminster Confession of Faith, 32:1 in *Forms and Confessions of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand* (National Publishing Committee of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, 1994), 169.

⁶ Peter Van Inwagen, “Dualism and Materialism: Athens and Jerusalem?” *Faith and Philosophy* 12:4 (1995)

⁷ While anything that lives and is not subject to death is immortal (never-dying) by definition, a distinction does need to be made. The claim that the soul *is immortal* is not identical with the claim that it is naturally or *inherently* immortal. Substance dualism can thus be divided into those on the one hand who say that the soul is inherently immortal and cannot be destroyed by anyone, and those on the other hand who say that the soul possesses *derived* immortality. It goes on living forever because God causes or permits it to, but it would perish if God withdrew His sustenance or positively destroyed it.

It should also be noted that it is *logically possible* to be a dualist who believes that souls do die when the body dies, but in practice dualism – especially Christian dualism, denies this.

Monism, on the other hand, gainsays the basic claims that mark out dualism.⁸

- Human beings are material creatures. They are composed of only one kind of substance – matter.
- “When humans die they die in their entirety, for they are indivisible monads. With the Christian monistic position the soul does not survive the death of the body...”⁹

An argument used by dualists against monism is that the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead presupposes dualism, as it is impossible in a monistic framework. This paper defends monism against this objection.

An Overview of the Debate up to This Point

In dualistic thought, the “soul” or “spirit” or “mind” when construed dualistically, as a nonmaterial substance, is said to be the thinking part of a human being, unlike the body. Among his reasons for belief in a “soul-substance,” David Clark states in a matter of fact fashion, “Mental phenomena are not properties of matter, and **must** be attributes of substance which is not matter” [emphasis added]. He adds, “Self-consciousness not only reflects on its past, but is conscious that it is reflecting. Consciousness transcends the power of matter.”¹⁰ Pascal did not mince words when he declared that “there is nothing so inconceivable as the idea that matter knows itself.”¹¹

⁸ There are numerous positions that fall under the heading “monism.” Brian Mclaughlan gives no less than 5 (one of them being labelled “monism” proper) including epiphenomenalism, materialism, central state materialism, non-reductive materialism and functionalism, in “philosophy of mind,” *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 597-606. The definition given here is sufficiently broad to allow the arguments given here to defend monism *per se* against the dualist objection, even if it might be found that at least one variety of monism is defeated by the objection. It should also be noted here that the monism being addressed is of a materialistic nature, rather than a spiritualistic one (where the only substance constituting humans is *spirit* rather than matter).

⁹ Jeffrey Boyd, “One’s Self-Concept and Biblical Theology,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 40:2 (1997), 210.

¹⁰ David S. Clark, *A Syllabus of Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: n.p., n.d., 3rd ed.), 174. Lest it be thought that this self-published work is not representative of any major school of thought, it should be noted that this 398 page volume

But there have been plenty of competent thinkers to whom such a notion has not occurred, or at least to whom such a notion has not seemed persuasive. John Locke, for example, was persuaded that

We... possibly shall never be able to know whether any merely material being thinks or no; it being impossible for us, by the contemplation of our own ideas without revelation, to discover whether Omnipotency has not given to some systems of matter, fitly disposed, a power to perceive and think, or else joined and fixed to matter, so disposed, a thinking immaterial substance: it being, in respect of our notions, not much more remote from our comprehension to conceive that God can, if he pleases, superadd to matter a faculty of thinking, than that he should superadd to it another substance with a faculty of thinking: since we know not wherein thinking consists, nor to what sort of substances the Almighty has been pleased to give that power which cannot be in any created thing but merely by the good pleasure and bounty of the Creator.¹²

Locke's point is that it is no more difficult to imagine *matter* that thinks than it is to imagine a *nonmaterial* substance that thinks. Merely positing a different kind of substance in no way makes the process of thinking less baffling. If the dualist finds no difficulty in conceiving of God creating nonmaterial entities that think, then it certainly isn't clear why she should find it peculiar that material entities could have been created with this same faculty. Thus, reasoned Locke, "All the great ends of morality and religion are well enough secured, **without** philosophical proofs of the soul's immortality" [emphasis added].¹³ Philosopher Clifford Williams sums up Locke's argument, calling it the "Parity Thesis".¹⁴

- 1.) God can make matter think
- 2.) There is no contradiction in the assertion that matter thinks

was a syllabus for Presbyterian and Reformed schools in the United States, and received high commendation as such from Princeton Theological Seminary. It might also be noted that it survived in popular usage long enough to reach at least its third edition. While no date is given, the author gives a dedication to his teacher, A.A. Hodge, placing the work in the late nineteenth century.

¹¹ Pascal, *Pensées*, #199, cited in Clifford Williams, "Christian Materialism and the Parity Thesis," *International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion* 39:1 (1996), 6.

¹² John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London: George Routledge and Sons, n.d.), Book 4, Chapter 3, Section 6, 441.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 442.

¹⁴ Clifford Williams, "Christian Materialism and the Parity Thesis," 3-4.

If we add to thinking properties such as feeling, choosing etc., and whatever is required for a being to be a moral and religious entity, then we arrive at the claim that

3.) God can make a purely material being to be a moral and religious entity.

No generally accepted rebuttal of the parity thesis has been published that I am aware of.

Van Inwagen, upon considering the debate between monism and dualism, concludes that there is but one argument left in the Christian dualist's arsenal against monism. This argument, he says, is the argument that "the doctrine of the Resurrection of the dead presupposes dualism."¹⁵ The scope of the argument pursued in this paper is deliberately limited to analysing this one criticism that has been made of monism. It is taken as a given here that there is no inherent difficulty in saying that that humans, as moral beings, *could* be purely material in nature. The reason this limitation is made is that no other kind of objection has had a comparable degree of popularity in the recent philosophical literature.

Dualism's Answer to the question of continuity

Dualistic accounts of human nature, it is said, "have absolutely no difficulty" explaining continuity of identity between death and resurrection. In fact, they are said to "guarantee personal identity"¹⁶ Given that souls simply don't die in the first place, there *is* no problem of continuity at all. The soul is the essence of the person, so while the physical organism may cease to function, the person does not. Rather, he/she undergoes temporary relocation. "When the body dies," says Robert Morey,

¹⁵ Van Inwagen, "Dualism and Materialism," 485.

¹⁶ John W. Cooper, "The Identity of Resurrected Persons: Fatal Flaw of Monistic Anthropology," *Calvin Theological Journal* 23:1 (1988), 26.

man enters a new kind of existence and experience. He now exists as a spirit creature and experiences what angels and other disincarnate spirits experience. Just as angels are disincarnate energy beings composed only of “mind” or mental energy and are capable of supradimensional activity and such things as thought and speech without the need of a body. This is why the dead are described as “spirits” and “ghosts” throughout the Scriptures.¹⁷

The continuity that ties us in this life on earth to the post-resurrection life in such a dualistic scheme is something like what Millard Erickson describes:

Believing in some sort of dualism of body and soul (or spirit) in the human person, the orthodox maintained that part of the human survives death. Death consists in the separation of the soul from the body. The immaterial soul lives on in a conscious personal existence while the body decomposes. At Christ's second coming, there will be a resurrection of a renewed or transformed body, which will be reunited with the soul. Thus, orthodoxy held to the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body.¹⁸

Calvin's doctrine of the immortality of the soul and its continued life after bodily death is perhaps the most stark in Protestant theology, not because it is unique, but because it explicitly asserts what is only implicit in accounts such as Erickson's cited above. “Again and again, [Calvin] identifies the anthropological difference of the soul and the body with the theological opposition of *savrx* [flesh] and *pneu`ma* [spirit] (in the Biblical-Pauline sense).”¹⁹ Bodies are things that need not be continuous, they are frail, transitory and corruptible, subject to decay. The real self, the undecaying, abiding core of identity is the immaterial soul. Regardless of how far this contrast is pressed, the soul is *less* touched by the consequence of human fallenness than the body in that it, unlike the body, does not die (which is an effect of the fall). Setting the more ascetic elements of Calvin's

¹⁷ Robert Morey, *Death and the Afterlife* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1984), 79. It is not conceded for a moment here that the dead *are* in fact referred to as spirits or ghosts “throughout Scripture,” but to pursue this issue would be to take us away from the more specific issue at hand.

¹⁸ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998, 2nd ed.), 1180-81.

¹⁹ Quinstorp, Heinrich, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Last Things*, trans. Harold Knight (London: Lutterworth, 1955), 57. Quinstorp adds, “although as an exegete [Calvin] is well aware that these two antitheses are not the same.”

Monists, rightly or otherwise, have much of this kind of approach to the difference between body and soul, attributing it to a Greek (in particular, *Platonic*) philosophical influence, where the soul was seen as imprisoned in a body. “Church historians,” Samuele Bacchiocchi observes, have noted “that a dualistic view of human nature and belief in the survival of disembodied souls were brought into Christianity by the Church Fathers who were influenced by Plato's dualistic

anthropology aside, it is at least clear that he saw the body, unlike the soul, as unnecessary and transitory, whereas the soul was necessary, and could (and *would*) ensure the continuity of the self's identity.

Dualism's Critique of Monism on the Grounds of continuity

It is frequently claimed that the issue of the continuity of personal identity is the deathblow to any claim that monism is compatible with Christianity. The alleged problem of monism here is stated as though once presented, it will be intuitively obvious.

- 1) Sameness of identity requires ontological continuity
- 2) Monism denies ontological continuity
- 3) Therefore monism cannot accommodate the sameness of personal identity
- 4) In biblical resurrection there is sameness of identity
- 5) Therefore monism cannot accommodate the biblical doctrine of resurrection

In dualism, "ontological continuity" is said to be secured by the survival of the soul over time in a disembodied state. In monism, since there is no such soul, "ontological continuity" must be equated with "spatio-temporal continuity." Dualist Robert Peterson, when in dialogue with Edward Fudge (who is a monist), makes the following comments about Fudge's view of resurrection:

Fudge believes that human beings cease to exist at death and are nonexistent until the resurrection. This view encounters difficulty in maintaining continuity of personhood... If we completely cease to exist when we die, with no immaterial part surviving death, how is it that we are the same persons who are raised? It is better to call this resurrection a re-creation. The human beings who once existed no longer exist. The new human beings whom God will re-create are not the same persons who died. **They cannot be the same persons**, because those persons ceased to exist at death [emphasis added]²⁰

philosophy." Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Immortality or Resurrection?: A Biblical Study on Human Nature and Destiny*, Biblical Perspectives 13 (Berrien Springs: Biblical Perspectives, 1997), 26.

²⁰ Robert Peterson, "A Traditionalist Response to Conditionalism" in Edward Fudge and Robert Peterson, *Two Views on Hell: A Biblical and Theological Dialogue* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2000) 104.

Elsewhere, Peterson sums up the dispute between dualism and monism respectively on this point as “the intermediate state/resurrection view and the extinction/re-creation view.”²¹ This particular kind of objection is exceptionally weak. All it does is steal the word “resurrection” and claim that it belongs to one side of the debate. It may well be that monists believe that the general resurrection *will* be an act of re-creation. To say that this means it is not genuine resurrection is to flagrantly argue in a circle by assuming that resurrection will not be a recreation but a reunion of body and soul – the very thing denied by monism. It is a swindle, a word game that demonstrates nothing. As monist Sidney Hatch whimsically noted, both sides could play this tiresome game:

[The monist view of resurrection], I have heard it said, is not resurrection, but rather re-creation. The other view, I submit, is essentially reincarnation – the so-called soul or spirit entity, wherever it has been, is put back into a body again.²²

It is perfectly acceptable to argue that the biblical model of resurrection is not re-creation. However, it is inappropriate to reject the “re-creation” model (accepting, for now, that this is what it really is) of resurrection simply on the grounds that it *is* re-creation, especially in light of the fact that Christians monists believe that resurrection is recreation. It is rather like saying, “the problem with monism is that it is monism.”

Setting this sort of disingenuous argument aside, the problem is not what we *call* resurrection, but whether or not what the monist calls resurrection (be it recreation or something else) is logically possible. Having outlined this particular case against Christian monism (propositions 1-5), John Cooper asserts that “[n]o monist I am aware of claims to have solved the problem.”²³ Whether or not what is presented here will be a “solution,” I

²¹ Peterson, “The Case for Conditionalism” in *Ibid.*, 173.

²² Sidney Hatch, *Daring to Differ: Adventures in Conditional Immortality* (Oregon: Brief Bible Studies, 1991), 95.

²³ John W. Cooper, “The Identity of Resurrected Persons: Fatal Flaw of Monistic Anthropology,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 23:1 (1988), 34.

will challenge this argument against monism by arguing that 1.) has not been established (even if it is true), and that 2.) is not true. It will be noted that I am not arguing that monism is true (although I believe it is) or that the resurrection will occur (although I believe it will). All I am doing is arguing that resurrection in a monistic framework is not logically impossible.

An initial response that can be made: The proper places of revelation and reason

Before probing this argument against monism, there is at least one cursory response to be made to the dualists' claim. What if the monist urged:

- I. The Bible teaches monism
- II. The Bible teaches sameness of identity in the resurrection
- III. The Bible is the inspired word of God
- IV. Therefore monism is compatible with the biblical doctrine of resurrection, entailing sameness of identity – even if we can't figure out *how*.²⁴

This point isn't made to *solve* the difficulty posited by the dualist. It simply reminds us that such difficulties may not be fatal. The difficulty, if it is a real one, is *one* argument against monism. If the Christian monists are *correct* about what Scripture teaches then the teaching of Scripture is an argument in favour of monism. What ought we to do if we see Scripture teaching something that we find very hard to believe, or something that we think is incompatible with other beliefs we hold? Whatever the answer is, it certainly isn't obvious that the monists are obligated to abandon what they think they Bible teaches just because it is perplexing. However, care needs to be taken. We would not be wise to simply maintain that whatever we think the Bible says is true, even if there are good reasons for doubting these beliefs. What if we believed, for example, that the Bible teaches that God makes square circles? We would do well to remind ourselves of C.S.

²⁴ Obviously Christian dualists will not accept that monism *is* a biblical notion. The point, however is to ask what the monist might do if she starts from an exegetical endeavour, while the dualist began in a "philosophical" endeavour, and they were to meet in the middle. Who should give way?

Lewis' quip that nonsense does not cease to be nonsense merely because we decide to attribute it to God. The question then as philosopher William Hasker puts it is, "is it nonsense to suppose that the reconstituted person could be the *same* person who previously died?"²⁵ The monist may well be justified in her appeal to biblical hermeneutics, but it would be questionable to do so in the face of a logical contradiction. Alternative interpretations of Scripture, in such a scenario, would become intrinsically more plausible. The question before us then is whether or not a logical contradiction is present. If we have good grounds for thinking that *no* logical contradiction is present, then we would be free to pursue the question of monism as an exegetical one (as well as a scientific one, an intellectual one, and so forth).

²⁵ William Hasker, Hasker, "Resurrection and Mind-Body Identity: Can there be Eternal Life Without a Soul?," *Christian Scholar's Review* (4:4), 322. My use of William Hasker throughout the remainder of this work should be taken with no small caveat – he claims that he is not a substance dualist. Rather, he endorses what he calls "emergent dualism" or "emergentism." In this view, explains Hasker, "the human mind or soul is produced by the human brain and is not a separate element added to the brain from outside." So far it sounds like Hasker is endorsing some variant of physicalism. He reinforces this appearance by comparing the soul to a magnetic field. But then he goes on to say that this need not suggest that the soul is mortal. "A black hole, for example, is an incredibly intense gravitational field which is originally generated by a massive object. But once it has formed, it literally squeezes the generating object out of existence." Hasker suggests that the soul might, in the same kind of way, become self-sustaining once the body has become unnecessary for its existence. *Metaphysics*, 73-75.

On a fairly elementary level it should first be pointed out that when a star collapses into a black hole, it is *not* the case that the physical mass has ceased to be. The singularity – the tiny remnant of mass with enormous density, remains at the centre of gravity. Secondly, such a concept of survival would require some hefty argumentation, which Hasker does not give. For example, is this self-sustaining field material? If it is not, then Hasker is a substance dualist after all. If it is, then the critic would, doubtless, like to see an account of this field. How does it work? *Can* it in fact function like a gravitational field? *How* could this self-sustaining entity carry out complex thought processes without a brain, if it was once generated by the brain? These and other issues Hasker chooses not to address.

However, when arguing against monism, he clearly believes that his "emergent view" offers ontological continuity, and he accepts that substance dualism offers the same kind of continuity, so his arguments against monism on the grounds of the continuity of personal identity are the same as those that could be used by the substance dualist. I have used Hasker heavily here since his expression of this objection is more lucid than most.

Has the dualist actually demonstrated anything? (Or is she illegitimately assuming 1.)?)

It should be clear from the dualistic critique of monism that a crucial premise is 1). The whole reason monism is criticised for not entailing *ontological continuity* (which entails spatio-temporal continuity, in the case of monism) is that such continuity is deemed essential to continuity of personal identity. If the rest of the premises were true (and I will argue later that 2.) may not be), then the soundness of the argument will stand or fall on 1.). If 1.) is true (again, assuming the other premises are true), then the dualist has demonstrated her case. But unless there is some good reason to accept 1.), the case against monism must be thrown out of court – why should monism stand trial for no reason?

So now I turn to the dualist critics of monism, to see what grounds have been given for the belief that ontological continuity is necessary. But this quest is a truly perplexing one. As one surveys the literature on this question, it quickly becomes apparent that this assertion is treated as an untouchable kind of foundational belief, which is self-evident and does not need defending.

Is the problem with monism as obvious as the dualist claims?

The dualist's objection to monism seems to be presented as though it is obvious. When William Hasker articulates this perceived problem with monism, he says, "It is... nonsensical to assert that God creates out of nothing a person that has already lived, died and completely passed out of existence."²⁶ It is not only false in the final analysis, it is

²⁶ William Hasker, *Metaphysics*, 80.

absolutely absurd, nonsensical. Is the idea really so ridiculous that any sensible person would *intuitively* find it unbelievable? Bruce Reichenbach has argued that this is not so. He uses the example of a non-human object – a red polka-dot handkerchief. Normally, to predicate of this handkerchief H at time T_2 that it is the same handkerchief H at an earlier time T_1 , we would say that it must have spatio-temporal continuity with H at time T_1 .

However, let us consider the handkerchief in the context of a *genuine* act of magic. The magician places the handkerchief, says the magic formula, and then opens the box and tilts it to the viewer, showing that the handkerchief has disappeared. He repeats another magical phrase, and the handkerchief has returned. Note that we do not say that the handkerchief now in this box is a new handkerchief; rather we affirm that this is the same one that disappeared and was magically returned to the box.²⁷

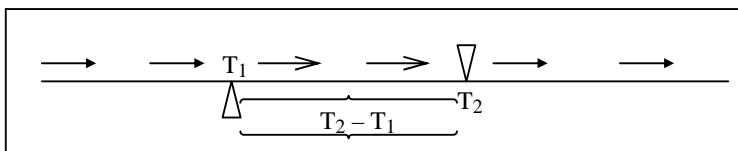
Now, there may well be problems with using this as an *actual example* of a thing being annihilated and then returning, but that isn't why it is being used here.²⁸ It is used here to point out that (provided one could find no other explanation for the trick), the natural intuition would be to accept that the handkerchief now in the box is in fact the one that was originally placed in the box. It wouldn't be obviously laughable that the handkerchief could be the same one. Reichenbach offers another example for us to consider, namely the characters of an American TV soap opera called *As the World Turns*, featuring the characters Bob, Lisa and others. For half an hour each weekday these characters chat about who among their friends is pregnant, who is having an affair with whom, and so on. Following the closing credits, they all disappear until the same time the following afternoon. Where did they go in the interim period? Nowhere, they simply ceased to exist (Reichenbach cautions us here not to confuse the characters with the actors who play them). "Their existence," says Reichenbach, "is one of installments [*sic*] encompassing

²⁷ Bruce R. Reichenbach, "Monism and the Possibility of Life after Death," *Religious Studies* 14:1 (1978) 29.

²⁸ The most effective objection to this usage of the analogy might be that it would assume the possibility of genuine magic acts. But perhaps this difficulty might be alleviated if the magician was Jesus and the magic trick was called a "miracle." In any case, the analogy isn't used here to show monism to be compatible with resurrection. It merely shows us that we would, having just witnessed such an act, be ready to accept that the handkerchief that appeared was the same one that vanished.

numerous gaps.²⁹ Despite this discontinuity, we still identify the characters as being the same people in the next episode. This remains true when the characters undergo considerable change. For example if the actor who played Bob died and was replaced, we would notice changes in Bob: his appearance, his voice, his likeability and so on. But still, we would come to accept him as the real Bob, the character who we have come to know and love (or hate).³⁰ Finally, we might think of an episode of *Star Trek*, where Captain James T. Kirk steps into the transporter and is beamed down to the surface of an alien planet. Even if we are monists, we don't naturally think to ourselves that the Captain has been replaced by an impostor on the surface below. It seems intuitively right for us to believe that Kirk has actually survived the process, even though there is no spatial continuity from the ship to the planet – we don't find it obviously absurd.³¹

Another example where spatio-temporal continuity is lacking, but where we would willingly accept continuity of identity, is time travel. Normally, the way to get from point T_1 to point T_2 is to wait for a given amount of time (the exact time waited will be T_2 minus T_1). This is



²⁹ Bruce Reichenbach, "Recreationism and Personal Identity," *Christian Scholar's Review* 4:4 (1975), 327.

³⁰ Ibid., 328. I have a nagging feeling that this second example of Reichenbach's may be less persuasive than he might hope. Whether the kind of scepticism it would be met with is warranted or not (I am unsure), it would, I suspect, arise out of the fact that the characters are not people, but mere *depictions* of what certain fictional people would be like if in fact they did exist.

³¹ In a somewhat amusing book, Richard Hanley considers the objections that might be made to the possibility of such transportation, and concludes that it is quite rational to allow oneself to be beamed with the hope of survival, and that it is "superstitious to refuse." Richard Hanley, *Is Data Human? The Metaphysics of Star Trek* (London: Boxtree, 1998), 162. Reference is made to this fictional phenomenon here not to argue that it is physically possible (although I don't see why it is not achievable), but only to note that it seems intuitively acceptable to an observer to conclude that a person has survived the process with that same person's identity intact.

It has been suggested by Nicola Hoggard Creegan (the supervisor of this work) that perhaps the reason we don't find it implausible for Kirk to have survived transportation is that we all have dualist intuitions. We will, whether we realise it or not, assume that his soul or mind has been taken out of one body and put into his new body that materialises on the surface beneath. This claim is, of course, unverifiable. Are we going to tell atheists with a naturalistic worldview that they really believe in the soul after all, despite their repeated denials? For myself I can only point out that I have consciously purged myself of as much anthropological dualism as possible for the sake of this exercise, and Kirk's survival still doesn't strike me as obviously absurd.

depicted in Fig. A.

Fig A.

But suppose I was able to build you a time machine, so that you didn't *have* to wait. You could get into the machine, press the red button at T_1 , and you would immediately experience T_2 . You would have "skipped" the time period between T_1 and T_2 (Fig. B).

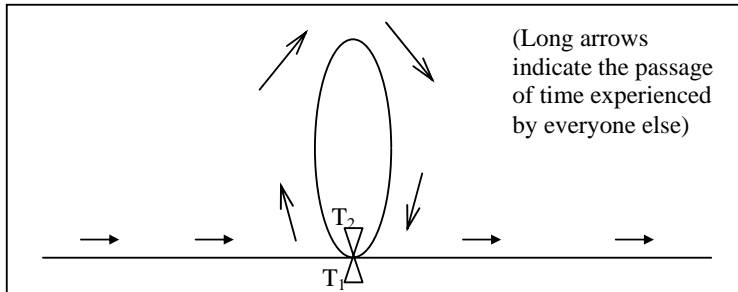


Fig. B

As far as the time traveller is concerned, she has travelled directly from T_1 to T_2 in an instant. However, as far as the observer is concerned (and in this case the observer is the entire space-time universe!), she has disappeared entirely at T_1 , only to reappear again at T_2 . What should we make of such a phenomenon? I think that most people who knew what had happened would consider the person who reappears at T_2 to be the same person they saw vanish at T_1 . And even if we were *dualists* we could not appeal to the existence of the soul over the interim period in this case, since the person has skipped this period altogether.

It should be added that even if we have great trouble with the notion of resurrection within a monistic framework; even if we find ourselves fearful of death in such a framework, anxious that we will not be able to be recreated from death; even if our intuitions *did* militate against such a possibility, to appeal to such a popular scepticism (if it did exist) would hardly constitute an argument against the *logical possibility* of resurrection in a monistic universe. After all, the notion of resurrection *at all* seems intuitively nonsensical to

some people, and they might effectively ridicule it by appealing to a widespread doubt about its likelihood, yet no Christian should think that *this* would constitute an argument that resurrection is logically impossible.

Given that 1.), even if true, has not been given any clear defence, this argument against monism is at least quite uncertain, and certainly not a major threat for somebody who thinks she has good grounds for believing in monism and in resurrection. However, to leave it there is unsatisfying, especially when one thinks (as I do), that there are other at least reasonable responses to the argument. So let's assume (for the sake of argument) that 1.) is true after all. Let's imagine that considerable arguments have in fact been offered for 1.), as well as the arguments against it. Let us (just for fun) take the stance of Merricks, who says that "[w]hether ceasing to exist and then coming back into existence is absolutely impossible is something philosophers debate. In my opinion, there are no conclusive arguments one way or the other on this issue."³² Proceeding on this basis, let's see if the rest of the argument would hold up as a successful rebuttal of monistic belief in the resurrection.

Proposed monistic solutions, and their rebuttals

Perhaps the most oft-cited example of a physicalist who posits life after death is John Hick. Hick refers to his view of resurrection as the "replica theory," the view that "we can think of [resurrection] as the divine creation in another space of an exact psycho-physical 'replica' of the deceased person."³³ He gives two hypothetical scenarios to bolster his claim that this is possible:

³² Trenton Merricks, *The Resurrection of the Body and the Life Everlasting*, 270.

³³ John Hick, *Death and Eternal Life* (London: Collins, 1976), 279.

Suppose, first, that someone – John Smith – living in the USA were suddenly and inexplicably to disappear from before the eyes of his friends, and that at the same moment an exact replica of him were inexplicably to appear in India... Further, the “John Smith” replica thinks of himself as being the John Smith who disappeared in the USA. After all possible tests have been made and proved positive, the factors leading his friends to accept “John Smith” as John Smith would surely prevail and would cause them to overlook even his mysterious transference from one continent to another, rather than treat “John Smith,” with all John Smith’s memories and other characteristics, as someone other than John Smith.

Suppose, second, that our John Smith, instead of inexplicably disappearing dies, but that at the moment of his death a “John Smith” replica, again complete with memories and all other characteristics, appears in India. Even with the corpse on our hands we would, I think, still have to accept this “John Smith” as the John Smith who died. We would have to say that he had been miraculously re-created in another place.³⁴

With respect to Hick’s first example, he clarifies himself elsewhere when writing more exhaustively on the topic, noting that the person who disappears “has not moved from A to B by making a path through the intervening space but has disappeared at A and reappeared at B.”³⁵

One of the chief critics of Hick’s proposal has been William Hasker. Hasker singles Hick’s line of reasoning out as clearly demonstrating the weakness of physicalism with regard to the doctrine of a future life. With respect to Hick’s first example of John Smith’s mysterious disappearance and re-appearance, Hasker charges that this is not like resurrection at all, even from a physicalist point of view.

In order to support Hick’s case, the examples must be seen as instances of total personal annihilation followed by re-creation. But to a generation of *Star Trek* fans the first example suggests merely an advanced form of transportation: It occurs to us that Smith’s re-appearance should have occurred in the transporter room of the *Enterprise!*³⁶

³⁴ Hick, *Philosophy of Religion* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1973, 2nd ed), 100-101, cited in Hasker, *Metaphysics*, 78.

³⁵ Hick, *Death and Eternal Life*, 280.

³⁶ Hasker, *Metaphysics*, 78.

This disappearance and reappearance appears to be nothing more than relocation, much like one would expect if someone were smart enough to invent a transporter beam. Hasker therefore would not have us consider this to be a case establishing the plausibility of life **after death** in physicalism, as he does not see that death has really occurred in Hick's scenario. But Hick anticipated this response, and has already clarified himself by saying that the person "has *not* moved from A to B by making a path through the intervening space but has disappeared at A and reappeared at B." Hasker however doesn't seem to acknowledge this clarification, and proceeds as though his "knock down argument" (as he seems to regard it) has done its job.

Hasker then picks up on Hick's second example, where John Smith's old body remains dead on the floor while an exact replica appears, claiming to be Smith. Hasker's first objection to this is fairly simple: Any dualist would read this as though Smith's immaterial soul, "having survived his physical death, is re-embodied in the newly created body."³⁷ But Hasker realises that this is not what Hick intends us to read. Instead, Hick would have us read the example *without* the assumption of a surviving soul, and rather as a case of the *end* of a consciousness and its beginning again. Hasker questions the possibility of such an occurrence. Is it "intelligible," he asks, for a purely bodily creature to live after death? He concludes that there are only two possible materialist concepts of humanity that might make this seem possible, which are as follows.

Firstly, speculates Hasker, is the possibility that

"John Smith" names a *general category* of some kind, so that there can be any number of John Smith's [*sic*] so long as they are sufficiently similar in the relevant respects. If this is correct, then there is no problem in saying that the "John Smith" replica really is John Smith. In fact, there is no logical reason... why God must wait until Smith is dead to re-create him – there could be any

³⁷ Ibid.

number of John Smiths alive at the same time, and all of them would have equal claim to being considered the real John Smith.³⁸

To show some of the implausibility of such a position, Hasker asks – which of these “John Smiths” could be considered the husband of Mrs Smith? And who would be responsible for the parking ticket John Smith got last month? But whether or not such a ridiculous *reductio ad absurdum* is successful really depends on exactly what the necessary properties are in order for an individual to belong to the “category” as Hasker calls it, of “John Smith.” What if one of the essential traits of John Smith is “being the one and only individual who can claim to be John Smith”? If the category “John Smith” included this definition, then Hasker’s *reductio* does not touch this “category” definition of persons, since a category understanding of persons would not necessarily entail that there could be more than one of the same person.

Now, this immediately invites a response from the dualist. If “being the one and only genuine John Smith” is part of the definition of being a member of the category “John Smith,” then what *would* the monist do if we were to witness Hasker’s odd scenario where John Smith is replicated prior to his death. Which one *would* we call the real John Smith? Wouldn’t it be purely arbitrary to decide to call one of them John Smith and the other his replica, rather than vice versa? I suppose the same question arises for twinned embryos. Which one really *is* the one who was conceived? Wouldn’t it be arbitrary to say which was the “twin” and which was the original? In this latter scenario especially, the problem is no more of a problem for the monist than it is for the dualist. Despite this, however, Bruce Reichenbach defends monism against this objection in response to Hasker. Hasker claimed that where two individuals claimed to be a person who lived in the past, and who claimed to have memories of being this person and doing all that this person did, “the

³⁸ Ibid., 79.

identity of the [new] individual can be settled only by convention.”³⁹ That is, we could, for the sake of settling this disagreement, just *agree* that one of the new individuals is the person who lived all those years ago, and the other is really someone else. Hasker suggests that the monist solution of identifying the genuine individual from the past must be purely arbitrary. Before noting Reichenbach’s response, I would imagine that there are many monists who would love Hasker to have suggested a non-arbitrary way to decide which of the new individuals is the “real McCoy.” Quite apart from what Hasker might have suggested if he had offered a suggestion, how would *any* substance dualist determine which one was the person they claimed to be – ask to see their *souls* to verify their identity? Reichenbach’s response certainly shows more promise. He offers the hypothetical scenario of Charles and Robert, both of whom claim that they remember living the life of Guy Fawkes. Our intuitions rail against the thought of saying that they are *both* identical with Guy Fawkes, and “neither can we say that one is him but the other is only like him, for we have no way of telling which is which.”⁴⁰ And so, memory claims cannot force us to conclude that a person at the resurrection *really is* the person who died. But is that really a problem for monism? As Reichenbach notes, *truthful* memory claims would certainly be good grounds for believing that Charles is in fact Guy Fawkes – the only trouble (and it is by no means unique to monism) is assessing the accuracy of memory claims.⁴¹ The “problem” is only one of epistemology (“how can we *know* who this is?”), and not ontology (“*who* in fact is it?”).

Perhaps a different response could also be made to Hasker’s criticism. He describes a scenario where John Smith is replicated prior to death in order to make us think that

³⁹ Hasker, “Resurrection and Mind-Body Identity,” 324.

⁴⁰ Reichenbach, “Re-Creationism and Personal Identity,” 328-329.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 129.

replication is implausible. But he is merely banking on his belief that we *will* find it implausible when he describes things like Mrs Smith having two husbands, and that we will think that the problem only exists for monists. What is *actually* implausible about it? Imagine for example, if a scientist was to split a zygote in the mother's womb, and as a result, two children grew. Which would really be the offspring of the mother, the real individual who was conceived, and which one would be the newcomer? Would such a difficult question in any way have actually demonstrated the *impossibility* of such an operation? It doesn't seem so. In fact, this happens naturally often enough – we call it “twinning.” What should we make of it? Is the immaterial soul divided in two? Surely not, for immaterial things cannot *be* divided. Hasker's response would probably be that there is a spatio-temporal relationship between the two children, and therefore it isn't the same as Hick's replica scenario. But the point here is the fact that that two individuals, in a given scenario, could claim to be in exactly the same relationship to another individual doesn't show the impossibility of there being two such individuals. In John Smith's scenario, if he were physically divided into two (like an embryo when it “twins”), there would be spatio-temporal continuity, but the same problematic questions that Hasker sees in Hick's example would remain. Which one would be Mrs Smith's husband? Which one would be responsible for the parking ticket, and so on. Clearly these questions are neither more nor less troubling with or without spatio-temporal continuity. “Puzzling” is not to be confused with “impossible.”

The second, and only other alternative that Hasker sees in Hick's example, is that “John Smith is identical with a certain living human body.”⁴² Given *this* definition of personhood, Hasker's objection to Hick is obvious before he even articulates it. Hick's second example clearly fails, because the body “John Smith” is still present, ruling out the possibility that

⁴² Hasker, *Metaphysics*, 79.

the new body is really Smith at all. However, it is obvious that Hick never intended to suggest that this model of personhood is true, or he would not suggest that John Smith could live on while his original body is dead. While not concurring with Hick about what is and is not possible, let us at least note that Hasker's attack on Hick is less than compelling.

Is dualism really offering ontological *continuity*?

Having granted (for the sake of argument) the possibility of 1.), it seems only right to ask if *dualism* can offer a coherent account of spatio-temporal continuity. "Continuity" is being presented by the dualists as a space-time bound concept. The soul leaves the body and continues to partake of life for a time and then re-enters a body. But can we really talk of a non-physical entity as providing ontological time-continuity between two physical bodies?

It is at this point we need to be somewhat more demanding and rigorous in questioning the dualist, for it is here so often that crucial clarification is glossed over. What *exactly* is meant by the notion that the soul "leaves" the body and thus provides ontological continuity? It is on this point that the popular dualism that exists in the pews has actually not apprehended what the philosopher of religion has really said, partly because the theological statements of the view are generally so hopelessly vague. When it is said that the soul is "immaterial" or non-physical, it would be entirely wrong to imagine a scene out of *Ghostbusters*, a hovering, transparent apparition that has three dimensions, and that can float this way or that to different locations *in space*. On the contrary, an immaterial entity is *non-spatial*. In dualism the body is extended in space, the soul is not.⁴³ Actions

⁴³ Richard Watson summarises the dualist mind-body scheme by saying that "the mind is active unextended thinking and the body is passive unthinking extension." Richard A. Watson, "Dualism," in Audi, Robert ed.), *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 210.

such as *entering* or *leaving* spatial, material bodies therefore, cannot be applied to this soul, given that entering and leaving spatial bodies would require moving through space from one location to another. Predicating such actions of these alleged entities would be analogous to talking about how much God *weighs*. God has no weight – not because He weighs zero kilograms, but because weight is a category that doesn't apply to Him. In the same way, spatial location is a category that does not apply to non-spatial things.

Is 2.) Necessarily True?

In responding to Reichenbach's materialist conception of resurrection, Hasker stresses proposition .2), namely that monism (by definition, it would appear) denies spatio-temporal continuity. He asserts that regardless of whether one is a dualist or a monist, ***bodily*** spatio-temporal continuity is out of the picture:

[*W*hat is it that lives both now and then? Is it literally the same *body* which shall rise again on the last day? Few have thought so; indeed, one can easily imagine circumstances which make this impossible. It may often have happened that each and every particle of matter making up a person's body later on became part of the bodies of other persons – and it might also happen that a body should be caught in a nuclear holocaust and pulverized [*sic*] into its constituent elementary particles, so that literally no single atom of the original body remains.⁴⁴

There are at least four observations that should be made about Hasker's comments and constructed scenarios, and there are perhaps others that we might think of. Firstly, Hasker's initial historical observation that "few" have thought that the same physical body will rise again is simply not true. In fact, a great many have thought so – the majority of the Christian church, as it happens. Merricks makes the historical observation that "the overwhelming majority of theologians and philosophers in the history of the church have endorsed the claim of numerical identity [of the resurrection body as it related to our

⁴⁴ Hasker, "Resurrection and Mind-Body Identity," 319.

present body].”⁴⁵ The general consensus has been that expressed by the Westminster

Divines:

At the last day, such as are found alive shall not die, but be changed: and all the dead shall be raised up, with the self-same bodies, and none other (although with different qualities), which shall be united to their souls for ever.⁴⁶

Secondly, there is nothing impressive about the fact that we might be able to “easily imagine” these scenarios. The fact that they are possible doesn’t suggest that either of them will necessarily occur. It is possible (whether Hasker thinks it likely or not) that God will prevent *all* the particles from any body from becoming part of another person’s body. It is also possible that no human body will ever be pulverised in a nuclear holocaust to the point where none of the original atoms exist. More important than this objection however are the next two.

Thirdly, Hasker’s first example is not as problematic as he appears to assume. Hasker is not suggesting that each and every atom in my body may become *each and every atom* in another person’s body, so that my body will become someone else’s body (which is improbable beyond measure). What he is suggesting is that my all of atoms may be distributed among other bodies in the future. What we are supposed to envisage, it appears, is a scenario where there simply wouldn’t be enough atoms to go around at the resurrection to reconstruct people’s bodies, because we have shared so many of them in this life. But is it really necessary to say that our *entire* body will be reconstituted at the resurrection in order to establish physical continuity between this life and the next? Clearly not. All we would need in order for there to be *any* physical continuity is one of the smallest possible units of matter of the original body to be present in the next, and this is clearly

⁴⁵ Merricks, “The Resurrection of the Body and the Life Everlasting,” 268.

⁴⁶ Westminster Confession of Faith 32:2, in *Forms and Confessions of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand* (National Publishing Committee of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, 1994), 169. I certainly do not endorse

possible in the scenario that Hasker envisages. But even this might be too strict a requirement for physical continuity. After all, it may well be that none of the particles present at the moment of our conception are now present in our bodies, but this doesn't mean that the body we have now is a "new" body, or that the simple body we had then wasn't the body of the same person who lives today. There is spatio-temporal continuity between this body and the one we started with, and this is deemed to be a *sufficient* condition for sameness (regardless of whether or not it is a *necessary* condition), even without any of our original particles remaining. The molecules we had then in some way gave rise to other molecules, which gave rise to others, and so on, until the molecules we now possess came into being. This is what we mean when we say there is spatio-temporal continuity between our embryonic body and the one we have now.

This has implications for what it means for our resurrection body to have spatio-temporal continuity with our present body. Our particles, when we die, may decompose into the soil. A few of them may be absorbed by grass, which is eaten by cows. The grass molecules in the cow then become "cow" particles which in turn sustain more cow particles, and if the cow gives birth there may well be particles in the calf that are spatio-temporally related to those cow molecules. This may well be true for all future calves this cow may bear. It may also be true for all the milk this cow gives, and for the meat that comes from this cow (as well as the meat that comes from its calves). While we might consider it a ridiculous question to even entertain, we are forced to concede that there is spatio-temporal continuity between the human body in this scenario, the nutrients in the soil, the grass, the cow, the calf, the cow's milk, and the meat of this cow and its future offspring, along with any creature that gains sustenance from the cow and its milk. The point is that there will in

this statement, as it assumes substance dualism. The point is only that the *same* body is said to be raised as the one that died.

fact be a huge number of particles in the future that have spatio-temporal continuity with the particles presently in my body.

The monist might take another approach. When the dualist appeals to the survival of the soul as a basis for continuity of personal identity, it is clear that it does so because it is deemed necessary for some essential part to survive. The question can then be raised, “Is it necessary that this part be *immaterial*?” There doesn’t appear to be any good reason to answer in the affirmative. Monist Stephen Voss might surprise his dualist opponents when he endorsed the view of Plato, who held “that one crucial part of the person by its very nature made possible the rationality essential to person hood,” as well as Plato’s view “that if the person is to persist then just that part of the person must also persist.”⁴⁷ If these concessions sound like a caving in to dualism, it is only because of a presupposition that what persists beyond this life must be immaterial (i.e. this only sounds like a concession to dualism if we presuppose that dualism is true). Applied to monism, this would mean that some physical element of a human being remains in existence between death and resurrection. Now, is this true? Possibly, we may never be able to check. Is it possible? Absolutely, and therefore monism need not, by definition deny spatio-temporal continuity. Not only that, but this concept of *physical* continuity appears to be quite biblical.

Consider the discussion of resurrection offered by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:35-44.⁴⁸

But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?” Fool! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And as for what you sow, you do not sow the body that is to be, but a bare seed, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. But God gives it a body as he has

⁴⁷ Stephen Voss, “Understanding Eternal Life,” *Faith and Philosophy* 9:1 (1992), 14.

⁴⁸ If this paper is light on biblical content it is because it is not an exegetical work. Paul is being appealed to here because he expresses a view that is compatible with what has been said so far about possible monistic models.

chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. Not all flesh is alike, but there is one flesh for human beings, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. There are both heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one thing, and that of the earthly is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; indeed, star differs from star in glory.

So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body.

The unavoidable impression one gets from this passage is that what dies and goes into the ground is actually the same thing that will be raised. Something physical (a “seed” in Paul’s analogy) continues between death and resurrection. His saying that “we” shall be changed seems to identify the thing that is transformed (although not replaced entirely) as the *person*. Thus we might see in Paul the idea that resurrection (for the believer at least) is a *transformation* from being a thing (creature) that dies and decays to a being a thing that does not die and is incorruptible.⁴⁹ This might be seen in other passages on the resurrection also, such as Daniel 12:2, “many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake....” As an aside we might also note the way the Apostle, in presenting this model of resurrection, seems to categorically *deny* the hope of continuity of personal existence apart from the physical resurrection. He comments in verse 32 that if the dead are not raised, then we may eat and drink, “for tomorrow we die” and our existence has ended. Clearly this would not be so if we survived death as immaterial souls. When discussing how it is that the person will rise in a renewed body, “Paul never even hints at the alleged reunification of the body with the soul at the resurrection,” which would surely be highly significant in this context if it were true.⁵⁰ Thus, in his clearest and most lengthy

⁴⁹ L. J. Kreitzer, “Resurrection,” in Gerald Hawthorne, Ralph Martin and Daniel Reid (eds.), *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993), 808.

⁵⁰ Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Immortality or Resurrection?: A Biblical Study on Human Nature and Destiny*, Biblical Perspectives 13 (Berrien Springs: Biblical Perspectives, 1997), 145.

treatment of the issue of personal continuity after death, “Paul does not even hint at survival of death, but rather of being raised from the dead.”⁵¹

Fourthly, Hasker’s second example is also not as problematic as he seems to assume. What exactly is it about a body being pulverised into its “constituent elementary particles” that causes Hasker to see a problem with the same body (or one that is spatio-temporally continuous with it) being put together in the future? More to the point, is it possible for anything to *be* broken down into its constituent elementary particles? Is there such a thing as an elementary constituent particle? Hasker seems to think that it would be highly significant that “no single atom of the original body remains” in his hypothetical scenario. But what is impressive about that? What if one were to say “no single cell remains”? The answer would be “Aha, but there are still smaller units that do remain – molecules.” And if one were to say that no single molecule remained, we might say “but some of the original *atoms* remain.” And if one were to say, with Hasker, that no single atom remains, what is so unthinkable about saying that some smaller unit of the original body might remain? And after that unit, a smaller one still, and so on. The point is, Hasker’s view of “matter” is highly reductionistic and (at the risk of sounding somewhat faddish), outdated.

Another objection has been made against the monistic view of resurrection which claims physical continuity, coming in the form of an analogy: If “an original manuscript of Augustine’s had burned in 457 AD then nothing we have today could be that manuscript by Augustine.” Even if God created a manuscript that we could not tell apart from the original, it simply could not *be* the original, since the original possesses the property of “having been written by Augustine,” and this property cannot be reproduced after

⁵¹ Carl Josephson, *The Intermediate State in Paul: Seeking Consistency in Paul’s Understanding of Death and the Resurrection* (MTh Thesis, Auckland University, 1999), 73.

Augustine's death.⁵² This objection shows little promise for at least three reasons. Firstly, if the reason for the impossibility of re-creation is the absence of the author of the original then there is no problem, since the author of humanity is God, who is immortal and omnipotent and will *a/ways* be available and able to do whatever is logically possible. Secondly, what if the manuscript's ashes were kept in an urn, and then by a divine miracle these ashes were "un-burnt" and reassembled? While we are not capable of such a feat, there seems to be no reason why God could not do it. Thirdly, the difference between human beings and manuscripts is such that this is not a good analogy. Human beings are always changing and growing to the extent that even when all the matter in a human body has been eventually replaced, we say it is the same *body* due to spatio-temporal continuity, even though it need not be the same body in it's original composition. Since an "original manuscript" is a static composition of ink on a given material, no such change is possible without saying that the original manuscript is no longer with us.

Summary and Conclusion

Monism might be false (although I do not believe that it is). The possible model of monistic resurrection that I have offered might be false, and certainly many might be inclined to find it implausible. I have not argued that it is true. I have however argued that there is no logical contradiction between monism and the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. Christian proponents of dualism have criticised monism on the grounds that monism cannot accommodate the resurrection of the same persons who died. The first premise of this argument is that continuity of personal identity requires ontological continuity. However, so far this premise has not been explicitly defended by any single line (or lines) of argument in the literature, it has merely been assumed as though its denial is ludicrous.

⁵² Lynne Rudder Baker, "Need a Christian Be a Mind/Body Dualist?" *Faith and Philosophy* 12:4 (1995), 497.

Not only has it not been established as true, but if it *is* true, it may well undermine substance dualism, since no account has been given of how a non-spatial soul can have spatio-temporal continuity with a body of flesh when it “leaves” the body, and yet given the dualist’s line of argument against monism this is the only thing that *could* guarantee the continuity of personal identity. However, even if we *grant* that ontological continuity is necessary (perhaps letting the dualist off too easily), it is just not true that monism by definition denies ontological continuity between this life and the next. The model I have offered for such continuity might be false, but if it is logically possible, then there may be dozens of other possible ways that continuity could be achieved. The point is, it is logically possible for there to be physical continuity between this life and the resurrection life, therefore there is no logical difficulty with ascribing the resurrection of physical beings to an omnipotent God (if “omnipotent” means “able to do whatever is logically possible”). A Christian is free to understand Scripture as teaching anthropological monism without worrying about this dualistic objection, which is not sound.

Bibliography

- No author given, *Forms and Confessions of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand* (National Publishing Committee of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, 1994).
- Bacchiocchi, Samuele, *Immortality or Resurrection?: A Biblical Study on Human Nature and Destiny*, Biblical Perspectives 13 (Berrien Springs: Biblical Perspectives, 1997).
- Boyd, Jeffrey, "One's Self-Concept and Biblical Theology," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 40:2 (1997), 207-225.
- Cooper, John C., *Body, Soul and Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989).
- _____, "The Identity of Resurrected Persons: Fatal Flaw of Monistic Anthropology," *Calvin Theological Journal* 23:1 (1988), 19-36.
- Erickson, Millard J., *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998).
- Forrest, Peter, "Physicalism and Classical Theism," *Faith and Philosophy* 13:2 (1996), 179-200.
- Fudge, Edward, and Peterson, Robert, *Two Views on Hell: A Biblical and Theological Dialogue* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000).
- Hanley, Richard, *Is Data Human? The Metaphysics of Star Trek* (London: Boxtree, 1998).
- Hasker, William, *Metaphysics: Constructing a Worldview*, Contours of Christian Philosophy (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1983).
- _____, "Resurrection and Mind-Body Identity: Can There be Eternal Life Without a Soul?" *Christian Scholar's Review* 4:4 (1975), 319-325.
- Hatch, Sidney, *Daring to Differ: Adventures in Conditional Immortality* (Oregon: Brief Bible Studies, 1991)
- Hick, John, *Death and Eternal Life* (London: Collins, 1976).
- Hodge, Charles, *Systematic Theology, vol. 2* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.).
- Josephson, Carl, *The Intermediate State in Paul: Seeking Consistency in Paul's Understanding of Death and the Resurrection* (MTh Thesis, Auckland University, 1999).
- Kreitzer, L. J., "Resurrection," in Hawthorne, Gerald, Martin, Ralph and Reid, Daniel (eds.), *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993), 805-812.

- Locke, John, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London: George Routledge and Sons, n.d.).
- Morey, Robert, *Death and the Afterlife* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1984).
- Quistorp, Heinrich, *Calvin's Doctrine of The Last Things (Die Letzten Dinge im Zeugnis Calvins)*, trans. Harold Knight (London: Lutterworth, 1955).
- Reichenbach, Bruce R., "Monism and the Possibility of Life After Death," *Religious Studies* 14:1 (1978), 27-34.
- _____ "Recreationism and Personal Identity," *Christian Scholar's Review* 4:4 (1975), 326-330.
- Rudder Baker, Lynne, "Need a Christian Be a Mind/Body Dualist?" *Faith and Philosophy* 12:4 (1995), 489-504.
- Van Inwagen, Peter, "Dualism and Materialism: Athens and Jerusalem?" *Faith and Philosophy* 12:4 (1995), 475-488.
- Voss, Stephen, "Understanding Eternal Life," *Faith and Philosophy* 9:1 (1992), 3-22.
- Watson, Richard A., "Dualism," in Audi, Robert (ed.), *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 210.
- Williams, Clifford, "Christian Materialism and the Parity Thesis," *International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion* 39:1 (1996), 1-14.