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**Soul, Body and Survival:
The Renaissance of Christian Materialism**

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*Such harmony is in immortal souls;
But, whilst this muddy vesture of decay
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.¹*

Introduction

Substance Dualism identifies the person with the immaterial soul, a mysterious entity hidden under a “muddy vesture of decay.” In our naturalistic age this view has come under attack as unscientific and is currently held by only a minority of philosophers. This is not the place to survey and assess critically the arguments put forward against substance dualism. Many are based on an oversimplified picture of dualism and would not withstand careful scrutiny. However, as part of the philosophical *Zeitgeist* they are to a certain extent taken for granted.² The fact that physicalism is all but the received view in contemporary philosophy of mind serves certainly as a strong incentive to express Christian doctrine independently of any commitment to substance dualism. A recent collection of papers by Christian philosophers is provocatively entitled “Do we need Dualism?”³ It does not come as a surprise that several non-dualist metaphysical accounts have recently been put forward by Christian philosophers. Worries about the compatibility of Christianity and substance dualism are hardly something new. Scripture clearly formulates the notion of bodily resurrection. Based on this testimony, the tradition has claimed that a body is necessary for the survival of a complete person. Christian philosophical anthropology thus followed to a large extent the Aristotelian tradition in which the soul is the form of the body (Council of Vienne, 1311-1312). Form and matter together constitute the person, a substantial unity, a compound of body and soul. The recent rise of Christian materialism is however a much more radical dismissal of all things dualist. It is the claim that the Christian view of persons can be preserved without loss within a genuine physicalist ontological framework. While this seems hard enough already when dealing with matters like consciousness, intentionality and freedom, it seems – *prima facie* – all but impossible when the Christian hope for post-mortem survival is to be explained within a materialist world view. However, the issue is not quite that simple. Whatever one's favorite philosophy of mind may be, a Christian philosopher will have to account for the resurrection of the flesh. Since the bodily resurrection will obviously be at the center of materialist accounts of the possibility of post-

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1 SHAKESPEARE, William – *The Merchant of Venice*, act 5, sc. I, 1.54.

2 For a critique of anti-dualist arguments see MEIXNER, Uwe – *The Two Sides of Being: A Reassessment of Psycho-Physical Dualism*. Paderborn: mentis, 2004. For a forceful recent critique of the standard physicalist world view see UNGER, Peter – *All the Power in the World*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.

3 NIEDERBACHER, Bruno; RUNGGALDIER, Edmund (eds.) – *Die menschliche Seele: Brauchen wir den Dualismus?* Frankfurt: Ontos, 2007.

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mortem survival, a deeper understanding of that difficult notion should be expected from investigating them.

Problems with Traditional "Compound Dualism"

Before looking at the Christian materialist views in greater detail, it will be necessary to understand why they refuse to follow the traditional Aristotelian route which seems to lead to a "softer" dualism, securing the body its proper place in the metaphysics of the human person. Thomas Aquinas developed by far the historically most influential model of what is often called "compound dualism." Thus a brief recapitulation of some historic material will be helpful. According to the Thomist view, human persons are not identical to immaterial souls but are only partly composed of immaterial souls. Aquinas argues in the Aristotelian tradition that a human person is identical to an individual substance in the species of rational animal. The person is neither the soul nor the body but is constituted by soul (substantial form) and body (matter). Against Plato, Aquinas can thus argue that "my soul is not me."⁴ The reasons why Christian materialists do not want to follow this approach are quite complex. The core of the disagreement lies in the fact that Aquinas does not provide a satisfactory account of a human being as an embodied entity. In obvious tension with its Aristotelian roots, in the Thomistic account the person can continue to exist without a body. In the intermediate state after natural death and before bodily resurrection the person does not have a body according to Aquinas. But even in this impoverished state the person continues to exist and is able to contemplate God. Eleonore Stump reconciles this tension in Aquinas by the following claim: Just as a person can survive the severance of a limb, so can the person survive the loss of its entire body, one of its constituent parts.⁵ The person as a whole is more than just the sum of its constituent parts, soul and body. The person is constituted by soul and body but not identical to them. But: If the substantial form of the person, the soul, can exist without the body it is certainly an independent entity, and thus in a pretty straightforward sense a substance. Even Aquinas admits that.⁶ What is the person over and above this substantial form? That is the crucial question. Can the person survive the loss of the substantial form, the soul, in the same way it can survive the loss of the body? Obviously not. But what is then left of Aquinas' claim that he is not his soul? His identity depends solely on his soul, he is embodied only per accidens. The Thomist soul is like a Platonic form. It is in space and time only per accidens. If the matter configured by a Platonic form ceases to be related to that form in this way, the form nevertheless continues to exist. This is exactly the model according to which Aquinas construes the soul-body relation. The ontological priority of the immaterial soul in the Thomist account becomes even more obvious when the issue of bodily resurrection is considered. Why is the resurrected body, even after a temporal gap during the intermediate state before bodily resurrection, identical to the natural mortal body? How can a corruptible body, made from standard cosmic materials like water and carbon, be identical to an incorruptible body made from some entirely different "spiritual stuff"? The body that did exist in this world did not endure in any way. According to Aquinas, however, the resurrected body is identical to the natural body because each substance has but one substantial form. So, in a human person the soul as substantial form directly configures prime matter.⁷ It is not the case that the soul as form works on other substantial forms

4 *Commentarium super epistolam I ad Corinthios*, ch. 15, 1.2.

5 Cf. STUMP, Eleonore – "Resurrection, Reassembly, and Reconstitution: Aquinas on the Soul", In: NIEDERBACHER, Bruno; RUNGGALDIER, Edmund (eds.) – *Die menschliche Seele: Brauchen wir den Dualismus?*, cit., p. 168.

6 *Summa theologiae* I, q.75 a.4.

7 *Summa theologiae* I, q.76 a.4; *De anima*, a.9. 407, I owe these quotes to Leftow.

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that have already configured matter (like molecules, chemical elements etc.) and uses them as mediators. The soul directly configures prime matter. Prime matter is not a substance, it has no form of its own, it has no nature. All it can do is receive forms. Thus, whenever the soul becomes embodied (inserted in prime matter) the very same body appears. The body gets its nature, its identity, entirely from the soul. "In itself" the "body" is formless prime matter. Brian Leftow states, in my opinion correctly, that Thomas is neither a substance dualist nor any other kind of dualist, "because what there is to the body if it is abstracted from the soul – prime matter – hasn't the stature to be a partner in any sort of dualism. It cannot even exist on its own."⁸ In the Thomist account a human being is, according to Leftow, just "a soul dipped in dust." The fact that the body does not even exist without the soul, except as mere potency, leads to the problem of how to individuate disembodied souls. They cannot be individuated by the body they long for, because there is no entity they could long for. The only way out seems to consider souls as full-blooded substances equipped with self-identifying primitive "thisness." But why call this "compound dualism?" The so-called "soft" or compound dualism of Thomas Aquinas is ultimately no dualism at all. It is, at least for someone with physicalist inclinations, in some respects even more problematic than Cartesian dualism. It renders the body apart from the soul practically inexistent, thus collapsing into an idealist view of the human person. For this reason, traditional "compound dualism" is not a viable option for those who wish to reconcile traditional Christian doctrine with contemporary naturalist views of the human person. Surprisingly, the contemporary Christian materialists take the Aristotelian tradition of seeing the human person as a compound in some respects more seriously than did Aquinas. At least one version of Christian materialism, the constitution view, can come very close to characterizing the human being as a metaphysical compound. And even the other version treated here, animalism, turns out to be somewhat Aristotelian in spirit.

Two Versions of Physicalism

Contemporary metaphysics and philosophy has been the origin of a wide variety of different forms of physicalism, the most widely accepted typology being: non-reductive, reductive and eliminativist physicalism. Other typologies have been developed with regard to specific philosophical issues, like David Chalmers' influential distinction of type-A and type-B physicalists with regard to consciousness.⁹ I will use a recent version of Chisholm's "entia successiva argument" to specifically characterize relevant versions of physicalism with regard to the topic of this paper. The argument is a reductio much like the recently discussed "too many minds" argument in favor of animalism:

If I am not identical to the animal that sits in front of my computer right now, then there are two minds in front of the computer, the thinking animal and myself, which is absurd. Thus I am essentially and most fundamentally an animal, not a Cartesian soul.¹⁰ Chisholm used a similar reductio to prove that he is not his body. The body that persists through time is an entity made up of different things at different times, an ens successivum. Chisholm claims that an ens successivum has different 'stand-ins' at different times because it constantly changes constituent parts. Am I an entity such that different things do duty as "stand-ins" for me at different times? If this were the case then at any time when I feel sad there would be another thing (the thing just doing duty for me) which also feels sad. Thus, yesterday it would have been a different thing that felt sad for me than

8 LEFTOW, Brian – "Souls Dipped in Dust". In: CORCORAN, Kevin (ed.) – *Soul, Body, and Survival: Essays on the Metaphysics of Human Persons*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001, pp. 120-138. here 137 f.

9 Cf. his "Consciousness and its Place in Nature". In: CHALMERS, David (ed.) – *Philosophy of Mind*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. 251-257.

10 Cf. CARTER, William – "How to Change Your Mind". In: *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*. 19 (1989), pp. 1-14.

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today. But this is absurd, for when I happen to be feeling sad there is no other thing that is doing my feeling sad for me.¹¹ Recently Dean Zimmerman has reformulated this argument as a conclusion drawn from these two premises:

- (P1) “If I am a thing that gains or loses parts, such as a brain or human body, then each time I undergo a change of parts, there is another thing where I am, a mass of matter distinct from myself but having all the same intrinsic characteristics – size, shape, mass, and even mental states, like feeling sad.
- (P2) But it is false that, where I am, there is something else with all the same intrinsic characteristics; there is only one thing here that feels sad, not two.”¹²

It follows: I am not a thing that changes parts (brain, human organism, ...) and materialism stands refuted.

The physicalist must of course challenge the premises of this argument. Denying premise (2) will lead directly to the problem of too many minds.¹³ Denying premise (1) is more promising. Generally speaking this can be done in two ways: One challenges premise (1) directly by denying that there are two things. Or, one can grant that there are two things here, but argue only one of them is a thinking thing. The first route is taken by those who argue for animalism, the second route is taken by those who champion the constitution view. There are indeed Christian philosophers in both of those physicalist camps.

Animalism identifies the human being with the human animal. If animalism is true, a human being has the same persistence conditions as a human organism. This implies that a human being is not essentially endowed with a first person perspective. A severely brain damaged human organism may survive in appropriate circumstances without having the properties of a person, maybe not even a conscious mind. Animalism blocks in a straightforward way the standard problem of “too many minds.” There is not in addition to myself a thinking animal (organism) sitting in front of my computer right now. I am identical to the living animal sitting in front of the computer. The Chisholm/Zimmerman argument however poses a more subtle problem. Animals have parts, many parts, and they are composed of different parts at different times. Animalists consider the living organism to be a substance. An animal endures, whereas the matter it is composed of undergoes constant change. An animal therefore has different “stand-ins” at different times. This leads, in the case of the human animal, directly to the Chisholm *entia successiva* argument. Peter van Inwagen has blocked this line of thought in an ingenious way. His metaphysics of material beings knows two categories: the most basic physical particles, which he calls “simples,” and living organisms. He arrives at that distinction by asking this “composition question”: when is a thing a (proper) part of something? He answers it by stating that objects compose a material object if and only if the activities of those objects constitute the particular life of a biological organism. Thus, in addition to the simples, only living organisms are genuine material particulars. Everything else, from mountains to computers, is simply a conglomerate of simples. The matter constituting my body right now is then not a thing, but just a certain number of simples. So there is not in addition to me, the organism, another thing where I am that is thinking when I think, or feeling pain when I am in pain. The body is not a particular, only the living organism is a particular thing. If that is correct

11 CHISHOLM, Roderick – “Is there a Mind-Body Problem?” In: *Philosophical Exchange* 2 (1979), pp. 25-34.

12 ZIMMERMAN, Dean – “Material People”, In: LOUX, Michael; ZIMMERMAN, Dean (eds.) – *The Oxford Handbook of Metaphysics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 494 f.

13 This is not so if the physicalist goes “four-dimensionalist” and claims that persons have temporal parts. In order to streamline my argument I decided not to cover this difficult issue in this paper.

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then there aren't two things here and premise (1) is false.

The constitution view is a form of coincidentalism. The person and the body are two things that coincide at the microphysical level but do not share all of their intrinsic characteristics. Think of a statue made of clay. The mass of clay that constitutes the statue and the statue itself coincide at the microphysical level, nevertheless the statue has properties that the mass of clay lacks. The statue may be intrinsically shaped like a woman, the mass of clay isn't. Imagine rearranging the particles of the mass of clay non-statue-wise. It would still be the same mass of clay (assuming no particle was added or lost), but it would not be shaped like a woman. Constitution is a relation that unites things of different kinds, and being of different kinds entails having different essential properties. A strand of DNA may constitute a gene, and by being a gene it acquires new causal powers. A piece of paper can constitute legal tender, and by being money it acquires new causal powers. That, in a nutshell, is the constitution theory of concrete material particulars. Applied to persons its central thesis is that persons are constituted by human organisms without being identical to them. Since persons and human organisms are not identical they do not need to share all of their properties and causal powers. It is possible that the person thinks whereas the organism does not. In that case there isn't another thing that when I think, is thinking also. If that is true, then premise (1) is false because even though there are two things, only one of them is thinking and feeling.

This characterization of the strands of physicalism considered here is still very sketchy. Coming back to our main issue, the question of personal identity and survival, we will now have to consider in more detail how these two theories can explicate the possibility of resurrection.

Animalism and Survival

For the animalist, the person is a living animal and as such an enduring substance. I am the same person I was twenty years ago because I am the same living animal I was at that time. In van Inwagen's metaphysics, an animal exists if there is a set of simples that are caught up in a special event, a "Life." The main characteristic of a Life is that the simples caught up in it work together in such a way that they secure the existence of successive sets of simples that are organized in the same way as their predecessors. An animal has a strong tendency to maintain its own existence over time, is self-directing and well-individuated. This is the metaphysical reason why an animal is indeed an additional object over and above the simples; whereas a mere heap of simples like, say, a cloud does not constitute a new object. Construing a Life as an event might lead directly into a four-dimensional, perdurantist ontology, where the event has temporal parts. This is not, however, van Inwagen's approach. He sees the organism as entity without temporal parts, enduring as a whole through the successive changes of underlying sets of simples. The identity of the organism through time can thus not be reduced to the identity of simples because they keep changing. This animalist account is thus somewhat Aristotelian in spirit, at least according to a materialist reading of Aristotle. The living organism is a structuring, configurational entity irreducible to the particular simples that are caught up in it at any given time. At the level of living organisms a new substantial unity emerges. That is certainly reminiscent of the Aristotelian notion of a form. Also, the organism has no real ontological independence from the matter it is made of, as would be expected from a complete substance. There is obviously a tension here between the novelty and irreducibility of the higher level on the one hand and the complete ontological dependence from lower level on the other hand. This tension is typical for non-reductive physicalist ontologies.

The question "How does the living organism function as a principle of unity?" is a key metaphysical question for any animalist account. Plausible necessary conditions for being caught up in a

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living, self-maintaining structure seem to be: only gradual replacement of simples and appropriate causal connections between simples. A complete replacement of all simples by new ones without any causal connection to the old ones would certainly result in the destruction of the living organism and the creation of a new one. It must be the simples in the previous state that cause the later state of the organism. This kind of causal connection is sometimes called “immanent causation.” The idea here is that a state S_1 in an object O brings about a later state S_2 in O itself.¹⁴ In the case under consideration: if human animal H_2 that exists at a given time is identical to a human animal H_1 , that existed at an earlier time, then the set of simples of H_2 is connected by immanent causation to the set of simples of H_1 at the earlier time. A life process may undergo a fission, like a cell splitting into two, where the two successor cells are causally related to the original cell. What would happen to an organism in this case? A complete symmetrical fission destroys the original living organism and creates two new ones instead. Then, obviously, while we do have some sort of causal connection, it is not a case of immanent causation.

The key issue for an animalist theory of bodily resurrection is whether causal connection is enough to sustain the organisms persistence or whether material continuity is required in addition to causal relation. Could my resurrected body be constituted by an entirely new set of simples that are – possibly even over a temporal gap – connected to my earthly body via immanent causation? Or is in addition to causal continuity at least some material continuity required between each successive state of an organism, so that a complete non-gradual replacement of simples would count as a copy even though it might be causally related to the original? The first reading seems to be one favored by Dean Zimmerman¹⁵: the second one seems to be van Inwagen's position.¹⁶

The fact that the simples of which a living organism is composed are in constant flux poses an immediate problem for a materialist like van Inwagen. How shall God resurrect a human organism, say Socrates, that has literally returned to dust, scattered all over the world? All God could do is reassemble Socrates by collecting the simples that composed Socrates at a given time, maybe the time of his death. But then, in principle, God could assemble more than one Socrates by taking the simples that made up Socrates at different times. The reassembled Socrates is thus not numerically identical to original Socrates. The problem is that sameness of simples or bits of matter is obviously not a persistence condition for human beings. Human beings change their bits of matter constantly. And what if simples that were part of Socrates at his death were later to become parts of, say, Aristotle at his death? For these reasons physical dissolution can hardly be reconciled with causal and material continuity. Interestingly, the reassembly view was not uncommon in early Christianity. But the problems were obvious even then. Difficult cases like cannibalism were discussed. A classical author of the 2nd century would be Athenagoras. In his treatise *De Resurrectione Mortuorum* (chap. 17,24,25) he argues that a human being could not survive physical dissolution even if the soul survived.¹⁷ Resurrection requires the reassembly of the identical body which then

14 SWOYER, Chris – “Causation and Identity.” In: *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*. 9 (1984), pp. 593-622. The notion is, of course, not new. Prominently, Chisholm used it in his explication of agent causation. See: VAN INWAGEN, Peter – “A definition of Chisholm's notion of immanent causation.” In: *Philosophia*. 7 (1978), pp. 567-581.

15 ZIMMERMAN, Dean – “Materialism and Survival”. In: STUMP, Eleonore; MURRAY, Michael (eds.) – *Philosophy of Religion: The Big Questions*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1999, pp. 379-386. An extended version of this paper is found in: *Faith and Philosophy*. 16 (1999), pp. 194-212. Zimmerman is not a materialist himself he is just exploring conceptual possibilities.

16 In his online paper “I Look for the Resurrection of the Dead and the Life of the World to Come” van Inwagen explicitly speaks of “material and causal continuity” (p. 6).

<http://philosophy.nd.edu/people/all/profiles/van-inwagen-peter/>

The paper has been recently published (in German) in BRÜNTRUP, Godehard; RUGEL, Matthias; SCHWARTZ, Maria: *Auferstehung des Leibes – Unsterblichkeit der Seele*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2010, pp. 209-227.

17 BYNUM, Caroline – *Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity*, New York: Columbia UP, 1995, p. 32.

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can be transformed into an incorruptible body. Unable to overcome the problem cases, van Inwagen dismisses this solution. In his earliest paper on this topic he entertains the idea that, at the time of death, God is to create a physical copy of the entire organism, or more likely part of the organism, and exchange this simulacrum with the original. The copy staying here on earth, and the original being safely moved away by God and safeguarded for future resurrection.¹⁸ This idea sounds weird, to say the least, but one has to grant van Inwagen that it certainly seems to be a metaphysical possibility. And when it comes to surviving one's natural death, almost any metaphysical possibility comes with its fair share of weirdness. Later, van Inwagen did not push this idea of a simulacrum placed by God anymore; he insisted, however, on material continuity.

In one of the most telling passages of his paper "Dualism and Materialism: Athens or Jerusalem?" van Inwagen compares the deaths of Jesus and Socrates.¹⁹ Van Inwagen explains Socrates' calmness in the face of death by his conviction that it was not he who was about to die; merely an adjunct entity, his body, was about to die a non-natural death. Jesus, however, knew that it was himself, and not another thing, who was about to die. It would require divine intervention for him to survive, intervention by a God who did not seem to be present. Van Inwagen writes: "I find the anticipation of being even temporarily composed of dead flesh frightening. I am, after all, an animal, and this prospect is the prospect of a total violation of my animal nature" (64). If an animal is to survive its natural death, God must preserve something that is materially and causally continuous with the living animal. Van Inwagen speaks of a "naked kernel" that stands to the raised person as the seed stands to the new wheat. That, obviously, is St. Paul's terminology. In the famous passage I Cor.15: 36-45 he speaks of a naked kernel (*gumnos kokkos*) that will be the seed for the resurrected body. The image of a seed is less than fitting if what survives is a Platonic soul to be vested in new imperishable garments. Not surprisingly, in what many consider a heavily anti-Platonic passage, Paul goes on to write that what is sown is a *soma psychikon*, what is raised a *soma pneumatikon*. It is the body endowed with a psyche that dies, it is a body endowed with spirit that is raised. Van Inwagen reads it somewhat differently: for him the *soma psychikon* is the body alive with the old Adamic life, the *soma pneumatikon* is the body alive with new resurrection life: "For Paul, the *soma-that-will-be* is the living flesh with which God will clothe the naked kernel, as he clothed the dry bones in Ezekiel's vision." (59) For van Inwagen, at least some minimal material continuity is required for the survival of a human animal, It is only on this basis that God erects the resurrected body in its full glory. This is clearly different from the traditional concept of reassembly: it may rather be called "minimal material preservation." The question that almost immediately arises is how the resurrected body could in part be made of perishable matter as we know it in this world. But none of this perishable matter has to persist forever in the resurrected body, it serves only as a link that secures the material continuity in the transition from this life to the next. The traditional image of a seed captures exactly that intuition. Based on its authoritative origin in Paul it was a very prominent metaphor in early Christianity. In his *De Resurrectione Carnis* (chap. 42, 43, 53, 58) Tertullian argues in the tradition of Stoic metaphysics that all reality, including the soul, is corporeal, made from material particles. Material continuity is thus necessary for survival. "Blessedness or damnation can only be added 'like a garment' to the identical material body that earned these just deserts."²⁰ In some passages Tertullian argues for reassembly, but he also sees

18 VAN INWAGEN, Peter – "The Possibility of Resurrection". In: VAN INWAGEN, Peter – *The Possibility of Resurrection and Other Essays in Christian Apologetic*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1998, pp. 45-52.

19 VAN INWAGEN, Peter – "Dualism and Materialism: Athens or Jerusalem". In: VAN INWAGEN, Peter – *The Possibility of Resurrection and Other Essays in Christian Apologetic*, cit., pp. 53-68.

This paper has been recently translated into German in BRÜNTRUP, Godehard; RUGEL, Matthias; SCHWARTZ, Maria: *Auferstehung des Leibes – Unsterblichkeit der Seele*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2010, pp. 101-117.

20 BYNUM, Caroline – *Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity*. New York: Columbia UP, 1995, p. 35.

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resurrection as a radical transformation, explicitly using the seed metaphor which stands for material identity through radical transformation. Van Inwagens position resonates many of these venerable Patristic notions.

Dean Zimmerman argues that the materialist can do with even less. All that is needed is causal continuity, even causal continuity over a temporal gap. He allows for a complete, all-at-once replacement of all simples without any material continuity. Zimmerman called his model the “falling elevator model.” There have been scenes in action movies where a person jumps out of a falling elevator an instant before it hits the ground, saving her life. With this image in mind, suppose now that my body were to undergo a case of instantaneous fission: every particle at that time is immanent-causally connected to two sets of resulting particles in the very next moment. Each set is arranged just as the original set of particles. My body has just replicated itself. In that case, following van Inwagen, we have good reasons to believe that the original organism has died and two new ones have emerged. But imagine that only one of the two resulting sets of particles was a living organism, whereas the other was a pile of dead matter. Given that there is no rivalry between two surviving organisms, we have good reasons to believe that the original organism survived. This is basically the Zimmerman model for God's resurrecting a human organism: “He does so by, just before it completely loses its living form, enabling each particle to divide – or at least to be immanent-causally responsible for two resulting particle-stages.”²¹ One of the two remains as a corpse right where the old one was; the other one is the resurrected body in the afterlife. Since the corpse does not constitute an object over and above the particle constituting it, there is indeed only one animal surviving. The immediate objection will again be that the resurrected body in Zimmerman's model is indistinguishable from the living organism here on earth. It is, so it seems, not a body of a new kind as St. Paul claimed. But this argument is based on the idea that the fission is strictly a fission of particles. But in the Zimmerman model it is the right causal connection that carries all the metaphysical weight. There might not even be division of particles. All the simples of the original organism that were given the power to replicate may just stay here in the corpse, whereas the replicas that are immanent-causally related to them may be of a very different kind of matter, a spiritual matter. There might even be a temporal gap between the triggering of the fission and the coming into being of the surviving body. As long as immanent causal connection is secured, the surviving organism will, of course, be identical to the one that has died. But can immanent causal connection be sustained in this case? It is a matter of dispute whether causation over a temporal gap is possible. It is *prima facie* unintelligible how the simples in the pre-gap body pass on a life-preserving causal power to the post-gap body. But we are dealing here with an explanatory model in which Divine intervention plays a pivotal role. God can bridge the gap ontologically by keeping the final state of the organism in His mind before creating the successor state. Of course, that does not count as immanent causation anymore, because the entity that has immanent causally connected stages has ceased to exist and can thus no longer exert causal powers.

One route open to Zimmerman would be to argue that the creative Divine decree that there be a successor state of the body that existed at the persons death is logically and ontologically dependent on the existence of this pre-gap body. Without the existence of this very body before the temporal gap, a successor state to it could not be created. An, admittedly, weak form of causal dependence on the pre-gap body could thus be preserved, even if God creates the post-gap body from scratch.

21 ZIMMERMAN, Dean – “Materialism and Survival”. In: STUMP, Eleonore; MURRAY, Michael (eds.). – *Philosophy of Religion: The Big Questions*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1999, p. 384.

See also: ZIMMERMAN, Dean – “The Compatibility of Materialism and Survival: The Falling Elevator Model”. In: *Faith and Philosophy*. 16 (1999), pp. 194-212.

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Again, it is hard to see how this could possibly amount to immanent causation since the material being has ceased to exist during the gap, it is only the divine mind that connects pre-and post-mortem body. A more plausible possibility might be to view immanent causal connectedness as a nomological requirement in our world only. Outside the realm of our natural laws two stages of an identical entity may exist without being causally connected. But all of this has (to borrow Thomas Nagel's words) the slightly sickening odor of something put together in the metaphysical laboratory. If it is not material continuity but causal connection what really counts in bodily survival, then a view of the afterlife without a temporal gap is certainly to be preferred. On the positive side for Zimmerman's model: giving up the material continuity requirement allows for a radical newness of the resurrected body, thus minimizing the problem of how the destructible body may be transformed into an indestructible body. One wonders, however, whether the price to be paid here is too high. Personal identity through time is entirely understood in relational terms. Nothing has to stay literally the same from one stage of the organism to the next if only the right causal connections are preserved. Instead of an enduring person we seem to be getting a perdurantist series of stages connected by causal relations. Tertullian, I assume, would have disagreed: Resurrection can only be given to the identical and enduring material body that has earned this just desert, a mere causal connection, possibly over a temporal gap, seems too hollow, too abstract to preserve the individuality of a person.

Constitution Theory and Survival

Does the constitution view offer additional conceptual resources which help in understanding the possibility of bodily resurrection? The key insight of the constitution theory is a non-identity claim of person and organism by which it wants to overcome the shortcomings of animalism. The person is neither identical to the organism, nor is it an independently existing substance. The person is constituted by the physical organism without being identical to it. In a recent book bearing the provocative title *Rethinking Human Nature. A Christian Materialist Alternative to the Soul*, a proponent of the constitution view, Kevin Corcoran, argues that the application of the constitution view to human persons yields the following three characteristics of persons:²² Persons are essentially beings with a capacity for intentional states, mental content directed at entities that make that content true or false. Persons are essentially beings with a first-person-perspective, the capacity to think of oneself as oneself. Finally, persons are essentially constituted by the physical organism that in fact constitutes them. Persons cannot survive the destruction of their body. The body is not identical to the person because it lacks some of the properties the person has essentially, like having intentional states and having a first-person-perspective. For example, according to the constitution view, the body, the living organism as such, has no intentional states. Neither my hand nor my nerve tissue, for that matter, ever wants to greet someone with a handshake; the person has the intentional state of wanting to greet someone. Corcoran states that an organism may continue to exist without constituting a person, for example in the case of an evil surgeon removing all of the brain except the brain stem. But persons do have their body essentially. They can neither exist in an disembodied state, nor can they switch bodies. Person and bodies thus have different identity conditions. The metaphysical question that arises here right away is whether the constitution theory, by claiming that person and organism are not identical entities, is not a closet-dualism. This becomes even more obvious when the proponent of the constitution view allows for novel causal properties of the

22 CORCORAN, Kevin – *Rethinking Human Nature: A Christian Materialist Alternative to the Soul*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006, p. 67.

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higher-level entities. Then we have an ontological pluralism, rather than a physicalist monism. It is minimally materialist only in so far as it denies the possibility of disembodied human persons and seems to hold on to a basic supervenience claim of personal on physical properties.

Without delving deeper into the rich metaphysical intricacies of the constitution theory, I will for the sake of the topic of this paper move on to the issue of the possibility of surviving one's natural death. What really puts a constitution theory of the Corcoran kind in the same camp as van Inwagen's with respect to survival is his insistence on the numerical identity of a persons body through time. But the very idea of constitution is not necessarily tied to this claim. The person constituted by a body can survive even radical changes in its constituting matter. This opens up the possibility that bodily identity may not be necessary for survival. It is necessary for a person to have a constituting body, but it may not be necessary to have the same body all the time. The constitution view thus allows that though a person is essentially embodied, it does not have a specific body essentially. The answer to the question whether numerical identity of the body is required for survival accounts for two versions of the constitution view. Kevin Corcoran insists on the necessity of numerical bodily identity for survival. However, Lynne Baker, a most prominent constitution theorist, argues that identity of pre-and post-mortem body is not only not necessary, it is impossible. For Corcoran the person goes where the organism goes, numerical bodily identity is a necessary condition for survival of the person. Numerical identity of physical bodies through time does allow for material changes if immanent causal connection is preserved. That leaves Corcoran no other options for survival than the ones available to the animalist. And, indeed, any position that claims that numerical identity of the body is required for survival is in exactly the same situation here. Even a Christian mind-body dualist believing in bodily resurrection and committed to resurrection of the identical body has exactly the same theoretical options available. The only difference is this: In addition to an account of pre-and post-mortem bodily identity, the dualist has to provide an account for pre-and post-mortem identity of the soul. This may be one of the principal reasons why some Christian materialists believe that no theoretical gain can be made by adopting mind-body dualism. The importance of this issue can not be stressed enough. The intuition that bodily identity is necessary runs deep in Christianity. Remember that Athenagoras argued that a human being could not survive physical dissolution even if the soul survived, and Tertullian argued that blessedness or damnation can only be added "like a garment" to the identical material body that earned these just deserts. There are basically two alternatives, each one with its share of problems: First, there is Aquinas' solution that whenever a soul becomes embodied it is necessarily embodied by the very same body. So the body in this world and the body in the afterlife, even if in no way causally connected, separated by a temporal gap and having all kinds of contradictory properties like perishable and non-perishable, would still count as the very same body. As mentioned before, the notion that is doing the trick is that of a completely unstructured "prime matter." Aquinas gets a lot of mileage out of that notion, up to the point of these highly counterintuitive consequences. The compound of a form and prime matter is a very special compound indeed, since one of the two components is mere potency. If labeled "compound dualism" one has to remember that this position is something altogether different from what is usually conceived of as mind-body dualism. There is a second way out: dropping the bodily identity requirement. This is the route taken by Lynne Baker's version of the constitution theory.²³ This is not an innocent move, however. In the final analysis it construes Christian bodily resurrection as one-time re-incarnation. To make things even more complicated: The constitution theory is supposed to be a physicalist alternative to mind-body dualism; it does not have the dualist notion of an immaterial soul at its disposal. However,

23 BAKER, Lynne – "Persons and The Metaphysics of Resurrection", In: *Religions Studies* 43 (2007), pp. 333-348.

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according to Baker Descartes was right to identify himself with a thinking thing. But where Cartesians see a relation between soul and body, the constitution theory sees a relation between human beings and bodies. "Human being" is not construed to denote a biological kind but a psychological kind. A human being is a human person. A person is a being able to refer to itself from the inside with a pronoun like "I." Being able to distinguish between oneself from a first-person perspective and oneself seen from the third-person perspective is the crucial capacity that distinguishes persons from non-persons. Persons can be constituted by radically different kinds of material and theoretically there might even be immaterial persons that are not constituted any material stuff. Human persons, however, are necessarily embodied. The matter that constitutes a person may undergo radical changes. Organic bodies undergo complete material replacement over the course of some years. Even more drastic changes are possible. Imagine the case where more and more of a brain is replaced by artificial computer implants. In the future Baker imagines billionaires seeking "whole-body" replacements to prolong their lives. A person may be constituted by different bodies at different times.

The Christian belief in resurrection requires the surviving person to be the very same as the person that existed in the natural world. The resurrected human person must ultimately be embodied because human persons are essentially embodied. But the resurrected body cannot be the same body as the current biological human body. The current biological body is corruptible, the resurrected body is incorruptible. Baker argues that whatever is corruptible is essentially corruptible. Thus she can conclude that pre-and post-mortem body cannot be identical. Of course, the premises of this argument are open to debate. But Baker claims that all theories that try to somehow preserve identity (reassembly, the seed/kernel metaphor, and the falling elevator model) are much less plausible than just giving up the bodily identity requirement. She even interprets I Cor 15:50 in this way, where Paul writes: "... flesh and blood can never possess the kingdom of God, and the perishable cannot possess immortality." In philosophical terms: Earthly organisms are essentially biological and carbon-based. Everything that is carbon-based is essentially corruptible. The resurrected body is incorruptible, thus it cannot be numerically identical to a biological carbon-based body. There is no identity preserving transformation from one to the other. That is why the seed metaphor is wrong. Seed and full-grown tree are both corruptible and changing and thus metaphysically alike. And indeed, this claim seems to be a direct consequence of the basic tenets of the constitution theory. The constitution view does not take being-a-person as a contingent property of a fundamentally non-personal organism. It gives the person much greater ontological significance. I am not an organism that during a certain time of its lifespan displays personal characteristics; I am a person constituted by an organism. For me to survive means that my first-person perspective survives.

How can my first-person perspective survive if it is not an indestructible substance, a Platonic soul? Baker's answer is surprisingly simple. She uses the classical distinction between free and natural divine knowledge: free knowledge is divine knowledge of contingent truths, natural knowledge is divine knowledge of logical and metaphysical necessities. Whether a resurrected body constitutes my first person perspective is a contingent fact, known freely by God. Therefore, whether or not it obtains depends entirely on God's free decree. Thus neither the soul nor bodily identity is required for post-mortem existence of my first-person perspective, it all depends on God's action.

Anyone familiar with the debate on personal identity sees a potential problem looming here: fission. Could God re-embodiment my first-person perspective, twice? Again Baker's answer is straightforward: It is part of God's natural knowledge that it is metaphysically impossible for one person to be identical to two persons. God does not bring about what he knows to be metaphysically impossible. But, you may have begun to wonder, what are these first-person perspectives that carry so much

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ontological weight? What are their identity and persistence conditions? To this crucial question there is according to Baker no informative, noncircular answer. The first-person perspective is an ontological primitive that cannot be analyzed by something which is not a first-person perspective and accessible through third-person metaphysical analysis. The existence of persons in our world is a primitive fact not analyzable by, or reducible to, any other facts. It is, however, a fact. And, again, whether a certain first-person perspective exists is a contingent fact. Thus it is completely up to God whether it obtains.

The difference in Corcoran's and Baker's version of the constitution theory is metaphysically quite significant. Corcoran's insists on the persistence of an identical material body and his view is thus physicalist in a straightforward sense. One wonders whether the ontological independence of the person from the body including the emergence of new causal powers at the level of persons can really be consistently defended if the identity of the person through time is determined by the identity of the body through time. But there is nothing in the idea of constitution that requires the persistence of an identical material constitution base. By making the person independent of a particular physical body, Baker's version of the constitution theory does resemble classical dualism more than she would probably like to admit. It is not the strongest form of dualism because the human person cannot exist in a disembodied way. But the identity conditions of persons as first-person perspectives are indistinguishable from the mere "thisness" or haecceitas that according to the prominent dualist Richard Swinburne individuates souls.²⁴ The first-person perspective of the constitution theory is thus no less mysterious an entity than the soul. It seems to me that constitution theory is located on slippery conceptual grounds and it slides, if thought through, either to the side of something hardly distinguishable from animalist materialism (Corcoran) or to the side of something hardly distinguishable from dualism (Baker). To put this differently: Do persons logically supervene (Kimean strong supervenience) on their constitution base? If yes, what is the difference from an identity view? If not, what is the difference from a strong emergentist picture?

Intuitively, what is really the hardest to swallow in the whole concept of constitution is this: The constitution theory as a kind of coincidentalism claims that two entities (the person and the matter constituting it) do not share all of their intrinsic properties. But at the microphysical level they are intrinsically just alike. How can two things so alike in their construction differ so radically in their powers and potentialities? Without making this disturbing fact intelligible, the constitution theory is to some extent a mere name for a not yet understood relation rather than a substantial theory with strong explanatory force.

Taking stock

To many believers in the great world religions, the possibility of an afterlife is a keystone of their faith. The notion of an immortal soul was for many the philosophical basis for this belief (which, of course, is independent of what can be shown by reason). The credibility of mind-body dualism has been undermined in recent decades, and many religious philosophers thought that the belief in an afterlife should not be attached to the sinking ship of dualism. This has, for the sake of argument, been taken for granted. I think, however, that this background assumption can and should be challenged. It would go far beyond the scope of this paper to survey the recent developments in the philosophy of mind. But it is fair to say that the two crucial problems of intentional mental content and the problem of conscious phenomenal states have not yet been resolved in any physicalist

²⁴ SWINBURNE, Richard – "From Mental/Physical Identity to Substance Dualism". In: VAN INWAGEN, Peter; ZIMMERMAN, Dean (eds.) – *Persons: Human and Divine*. New York: Oxford UP, 2007, pp. 142-165.

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ontologies. We do have certain physicalist theories of intentionality but they cover only a very small range of intentional states, mostly states immediately caused by the environment. And we do have certain physicalist theories of consciousness but they cover mostly what is today called the “easy” problem of consciousness and not the “hard” problem of consciousness. Because intentionality and consciousness are essential for a thinking thing, it is fair to say that we have not really moved much beyond what Leibniz expressed in his famous image of the mill. Even a detailed look at the neural mechanisms does not really help. We basically have no clue how a material thing like a brain manages to have conscious intentional states, We have made progress in finding the neural correlates of the conscious mind, but that, as almost everybody admits nowadays, does not solve the metaphysical problem. Indeed, even materialists like van Inwagen or Corcoran would not deny this. They would, however, deny that dualism of substance or properties provides a better explanation how conscious thinking is possible in our world. If nobody can provide a good theory, why not go with the one that allows for more ontological parsimony and fits easier with the sciences.²⁵

Not being a physicalist myself, I would challenge the claim that dualistic theories are in the same boat with physicalism in their inability to explain the emergence of mind in a material world. By taking mental substances or properties as fundamental, the question of their emergence disappears. They are just to be accepted as part of the furniture of the universe, and the basic particles and fields in the physical world have to be taken for granted by the physicalist. If phenomena like intentionality and consciousness cannot be explained by reference to basic physical entities alone, then there is good reason to assume that the furniture of the universe consists of more than just physical entities. As Plantinga has correctly pointed out, the fact that we cannot understand how a change in a physical thing can be a mental change and thus could constitute a sensation or thought, is not matched by an equal inability to imagine how an immaterial thing could be thinking. “We certainly can't see that no immaterial thing can think.”²⁶ Consider, in addition, that physicalism is in grave difficulty understanding in merely materialistic terms the nature of abstract objects in the formal sciences and the nature of normative facts in ethics. The explanatory power of materialism is quite limited at this point. To be fair: There is on top of a strong cultural bias towards a physicalist worldview the indisputable fact that all dualist theories give rise to serious theoretical problems, especially the causal pairing of spatial and non-spatial entities. To overcome these problems, I would argue that the mind-body relation must be much more intimate than classical interactionist dualism construes it. Shakespeare may be right that we cannot hear the harmony of the soul, that we do not understand the nature of the mind, but he is wrong to attribute this to the “muddy vesture of decay” that encloses it. But that is a topic for a different paper.

Where does this leave us? What has been shown, I would argue, is that the Christian belief in resurrection is, at least to a considerable extent, conceptually neutral to the metaphysical question whether dualism is tenable or not. One can be a rational Christian on either side of this aisle. This flies in the face of the popular belief, especially among the well-educated, that religion is intrinsically bound to some kind of substance dualism. The tradition has thus with good reason sought to find middle ground between dualism and physicalism in the form of Thomistic Aristotelianism. If I am right, this move was well-motivated but, for the reasons given, of limited success. It is here where I would like to see work to be done by Christian philosophers. The other interesting result of this analysis is this: It is a crucial task for any Christian philosophy to come up

25 VAN INWAGEN, Peter – “A Materialist Ontology of Human Beings”, In: VAN INWAGEN, Peter; ZIMMERMAN, Dean (eds.) – *Persons: Human and Divine*, cit., pp. 199-215;

CORCORAN, Kevin – *Rethinking Human Nature: A Christian Materialist Alternative to the Soul*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006, pp. 61-63.

26 PLANTINGA, Alvin – “Materialism and Christian Belief”. In: VAN INWAGEN, Peter; ZIMMERMAN, Dean (eds.) – *Persons: Human und Divine*, cit., p. 116.

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with a rational account of the possibility of bodily resurrection. While for many the key question for Christian philosophers seems to be “Do we need Cartesian souls?”, I hope to have shown that the question “Do we need numerical identity of pre-and post-mortem body” is a question of similar importance to Christian philosophy. Simply taking refuge in classical dualism does not answer it.