

Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers

Volume 13 | Issue 3

Article 8

7-1-1996

Reply to Stump and Kretzmann

Richard Swinburne

Follow this and additional works at: <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/faithandphilosophy>

Recommended Citation

Swinburne, Richard (1996) "Reply to Stump and Kretzmann," *Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers*: Vol. 13 : Iss. 3 , Article 8.

Available at: <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/faithandphilosophy/vol13/iss3/8>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at ePLACE: preserving, learning, and creative exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers by an authorized editor of ePLACE: preserving, learning, and creative exchange.

REPLY TO STUMP AND KRETZMANN

Richard Swinburne

Stump and Kretzmann object to my argument for substance dualism on the ground that its statement involves an implausibly stringent understanding of a hard fact about a time as one whose truth conditions lie solely at that time. I am however entitled to my own definitions, and there is a simple reason why the "standard examples" of hard facts which they provide do not satisfy my definition - they all concern instants and not periods of time.

After alluding to various counter-arguments which they might produce against my modal argument for substance dualism; and generously conceding various assumptions of mine which they would like to challenge, all given infinite time, Stump and Kretzmann home in on one counter-argument which they regard as decisive. This depends crucially on their claim that (D'ii), "In 1985 Richard's soul begins to exist and exists for some time, however short", describes a hard fact about 1985. That, as they acknowledge, I deny, since it entails the non-existence of Richard's soul in 1984. I hold, in their words, that "any fact about a time *t* is a soft fact if it entails a hard fact about any other time, whether earlier or later than *t*." They then claim that this rules out many standard examples used to illustrate hard facts and consequently they find my "requirements for the status of hard fact" to be "very implausible". So they feel entitled to claim that (D'ii) describes a hard fact about 1985.

In my original statement of the argument, I wrote only of propositions which "describe only 1984 states of affairs." I later put this in terms of the sharper notions of describing "hard facts" about 1984. Philosophical notions introduced into the literature by one author for one purpose often need tightening up when they are used by other authors or for other purposes, and become part of the general philosophical currency. Since the argument being criticised is mine, I am entitled to my own way of tightening up terms, my own definitions. So even if certain "standard examples" of hard facts given by others don't count as hard facts on my definition, that is irrelevant to my argument which remains intact.

Note however that my requirements for the status of hard fact are not nearly as "stringent" as Stump and Kretzmann imply. Facts are not hard facts or soft facts *simpliciter*; they are hard facts or soft facts about a



time mentioned in the description of the fact. Now the facts which I discussed whose status as hard or soft was at stake were all facts about periods, i.e. intervals of some duration—1984 or 1985. And it is easy enough to give endless examples of hard facts about periods. Periods are bounded by durationless instants—1984 is bounded by midnight on 31 December 1983 and midnight on 31 December 1984. I have argued (in a chapter from which Stump and Kretzmann cite another view of mine about time¹) that all talk about events happening at instants is analyzable into talk about events happening over periods—e.g. an object being green at 2 pm, is it being green over a period which includes 2 pm. If that is correct, there will be no hard facts at all about instants. Of the three 'standard examples' which Stump and Kretzmann cite, one is explicitly about an instant and the other two contain dummy names which look as if they are names of instants. So it is not surprising that these are not hard facts—it is not an accidental or unwelcome consequence of my definition.

Oriel College—Oxford

NOTES

1. Richard Swinburne, *The Christian God*, Clarendon Press, 1994, pp72-4.