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Kevin J. Corcoran

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# PERSONS AND BODIES

Kevin J. Corcoran

Defenders of a priori arguments for dualism assume that the Cartesian thesis that possibly, I exist but no bodies exist *and* the physicalist thesis that I am identical with my body, are logically inconsistent. Trenton Merricks offers an argument for the compatibility of those theses. In this paper I examine several objections to Merricks' argument. I show that none is ultimately persuasive. Nevertheless I claim that Merricks' argument should not be accepted. I next propose a view of persons that is an alternative both to person-body identity and Cartesian dualism and offer a view of the after-life that is compatible both with the alternative conception of persons I present and the Christian doctrine of resurrection.

## I

Defenders of a priori arguments for dualism argue from the necessity of identity claims and the Cartesian thesis that possibly, I exist but no physical object exists, to the denial of the claim that I am identical with my body. Standard objections to a priori arguments for dualism proceed by rejecting the Cartesian thesis. But what of the following conjunction: Possibly, I exist but no physical object exists *and* I am identical with my body. Can one hold to it with logical consistency? It has long been assumed that one cannot, that once one becomes convinced of the Cartesian thesis one is forced to give up person-body identity in favor of the Cartesian conclusion that one is *not* identical with one's body. That is just the point of a priori arguments for dualism.

It is important to note, however, that the claim

(PB) I am identical with my body

is inconsistent with the conjunction of

(i) For all  $x$  and all  $y$ , if  $x$  is identical with  $y$ , then  $x$  is necessarily identical with  $y$

and

(ii) Possibly, I exist but no physical object exists

*only if* my body is such that it is impossible for it to exist but no physical



object exist. Therefore, (i), (ii) and (PB) are logically incompatible only if

(iii) My body is *essentially* a physical object

(iii) looks at first blush to have impeccable credentials for being true. Indeed, the thesis that physical objects like bodies are essentially physical seems to have the status of modal orthodoxy.<sup>1</sup> But Michael Hooker, in a criticism of Descartes' a priori argument for dualism, claims that although it may well be that he cannot *survive* the destruction of the physical object he is (being in fact identical to a body) he might nevertheless still have *existed* in a world devoid of physical objects altogether.<sup>2</sup> And if that is so, then given the necessity of identity claims, it follows that (iii) is false.

Hooker offers no argument for the consistency of (i), (ii) and (PB). Trenton Merricks does.<sup>3</sup> If Merricks' argument is sound, then the physicalist may hold (i), (ii) and (PB) without inconsistency.

## II

### 1. An Argument Against A Priori Arguments for Dualism

Here is Merricks' argument against a priori arguments for dualism.<sup>4</sup>

(i) For all  $x$  and all  $y$ , if  $x$  is identical with  $y$ , then  $x$  is necessarily identical with  $y$

(ii) Possibly, I exist and no physical thing exists

(PB) I am identical with my body

Therefore,

(iv) Possibly, my body exists and no physical thing exists

(iv) implies the denial of (iii). And if (iii) is false, then a priori arguments for dualism that depend on it, or an equivalent, fail. More important for our purposes, if (iv) is true, then (i), (ii) and (PB) are logically consistent.

### 2. Objections to Merricks' Argument Against Dualism

Merricks himself considers the following objection to his argument:

**Objection:** (iii) is true, and analytically so, such that on consideration any well formed adult cognizer can just see that it is true. After all, my body is a body, and part of what it *means* to be a body is to be a physical thing. Therefore, Merricks' argument fails.

**Merricks' Reply:** The objection relies on the following claim:

(N) It is *necessarily* true that a body is a physical thing

While Merricks grants the truth of (N)— "I do not deny [(N)]... it is evidently true; part of what it means to be a body...is to be a physical

thing"<sup>5</sup>— he denies that (iii) follows from it. He is right about that. This is brought out by considering

(M) All biological mothers have (had) biological offspring

(M) is necessarily true. Part of what it means to be a biological mother is to have (had) biological offspring. Of course it does not follow from (M) that my mother, who in fact has (had) biological offspring, has the property of having (had) biological offspring *essentially* insofar as my mother is not *essentially* a mother. My mother could have failed to be a mother.

Likewise, claims Merricks, "'a body is a body' or 'a body is a physical thing' may be necessarily true, [but] it does not follow from this that my body...is essentially a body."<sup>6</sup> Merricks asks whether or not his body has the property "is a physical thing," or "is a body" essentially. He answers: "If I think I really am identical with my body, this comes down to the question of whether it follows from my having the property *is a physical object* or *is a body* that I have that property essentially."<sup>7</sup> Once it is clear that (N) does not commit one to (iii), then it becomes clear that while (N) may be analytic (iii) is not.

Denying that one is a physical object entails that one is not essentially physical. So one who takes up either Merricks' argument or the Cartesian argument is forced to reject her being essentially physical. Moreover, if it is the case that my body is not essentially physical, then I may hold to the necessity of identity claims *and* the proposition that possibly, I exist but no physical object exists, without having to sacrifice the physicalist claim that I am identical with my body.

There are two objections to Merricks' argument that he doesn't consider. Both claim to derive a contradiction from the conjunction of (iv) and the claim that (N) necessarily, a body is a physical object. Despite their initial plausibility, however, I maintain that neither succeeds in debunking Merricks' argument.

### 3. An Objection Based On An Alleged Contradiction

**Objection:** From the conjunction of (iv) and (N) it follows that possibly my body exists and no bodies exist. And that is a contradiction. Here is the argument.

- (iv) Possibly, my body exists and no physical object exists
- (N) Necessarily, a body is a physical object
- (v) Necessarily, if no physical object exists, then no bodies exist

Therefore,

- (vi) Possibly, my body exists and no bodies exist

(vi) is a contradiction and so necessarily false. The identity theorist committed to the necessity of identity claims who becomes convinced of the Cartesian thesis that possibly she exists but no physical thing exists must accept (iv). (iv) when coupled with (N) issues in (vi). So the identity

theorist committed to the necessity of identity claims who also accepts the Cartesian thesis is implicitly committed to an impossibility.

**Reply:** The conclusion of the argument is a claim to which the identity theorist we are imagining is committed. Since she claims that what gets picked out by her utterance of the words “my body” is not essentially physical she is committed to there being a possible world at which the proposition “my body exists and no bodies exist” is true. So she does not take (vi) to express a contradiction. Once we realize that the English phrase “my body” is being treated by the identity theorist as a name, a name that picks out an object that actually, contingently, is a body but could fail to be a body, we can see why she is wholeheartedly committed to (vi), (vi) now being understood as expressing the proposition that possibly, the object picked out by the words “my body” exists but no bodies exist.

It is easily seen that (vi) does not express a contradiction on this reading when the argument is stated more formally. Let us employ the following abbreviations in restating the argument:

b=my body  
 B= is a body  
 P= is a physical object

Thus we get:

(iv)  $\Diamond [\exists x (x=b) \ \& \ \sim \exists x (Px)]$   
 (N)  $\Box \forall x (Bx \supset Px)$   
 (v)  $\Box [\sim \exists x (Px) \supset \sim \exists x (Bx)]$

Therefore,

(vi)  $\Diamond [\exists x (x=b) \ \& \ \sim \exists x (Bx)]$

It is obvious from this formulation that (vi) is not a contradiction. So it has not been shown that the conjunction of (i), (ii) and (PB) is logically inconsistent.

#### 4. Another Objection Based On An Alleged Contradiction

**Objection:** From the claim that possibly, my body exists and no physical object exists and the claim that necessarily, a body is a physical object, it follows that possibly, one and the same object both is and is not a body. And surely that is a contradiction. Here is the argument.

(iv) Possibly, my body exists and no physical object exists  
 (N) Necessarily, a body is a physical object  
 (vii) My body exists  
 (viii) If my body exists, then  $(\exists x) (x \text{ is a body})$

Therefore,

(ix) Possibly, a body exists and no physical object exists [From (iv) and (viii)]

But,

(x) Necessarily, If no physical object exists, then no bodies exist  
[From (N)]

So,

(xi) Possibly,  $(\exists x)$  (x is a body and x is not a body) [From (ix) and (x)]

Holding the conjunction of the physicalist claim (PB), the Cartesian thesis (ii) and the necessity of identity claims (i) requires accepting (iv). (iv) coupled with (N) leads to (xi). (xi) is a contradiction and so not possible. Therefore, the argument against (iii) is a *reductio* of its premises: they cannot all be true.

**Reply:** (xi) surely is a contradiction. However, someone committed to (iv) will reject the argument as unsound. The problem, she will say, lies with (viii). (viii) is only *contingently* true. Since the English words “my body” function as a name that rigidly designates the object picked out by it, an object which actually, contingently, is a body but could fail to be a body, there are worlds at which (viii) is false. In order to derive (ix) from (viii) and then (xi) from the conjunction of (ix) and (x), (viii) needs to be not only true but *necessarily* true.

In order to demonstrate the logical inconsistency of (i), (ii) and (PB) what is needed is an argument that shows that in any possible world in which my body exists, there exists an object that has the property of being a body. No such argument has been forthcoming. By way of contrast there is an argument for (iv), and since the defender of that argument takes the words “my body” to be functioning as a name she takes (iv) to consist in the denial of the *de re* modal claim that her body is essentially physical, is essentially a body. Thus (iv) entails that her body possesses the property of possibly existing in bodiless worlds. In short, it has not been shown that (i), (ii) and (PB) are logically incompatible.

### III

#### 1. On Consistency and Implausibility

Can someone hold consistently to the necessity of identity claims, the Cartesian thesis that possibly, she exists but no physical object exists and the claim that she is identical with her body? I don’t know. The three propositions are not *analytically* inconsistent, nor does there appear to be another proposition held by the defender of such a view that is logically inconsistent with the conjunction of these three. Moreover, I simply cannot think of a non question begging argument that *shows* the three to be logically inconsistent. So on the question of logical consistency perhaps agnosticism is the best counsel. But there is another question: *Should* anyone hold jointly to these three claims? About this I have grave doubts. Here’s why.

If I am committed to the conjunction of (i), (ii) and (PB), then I am committed to the *prima facie* implausible view that my body—this spatially extended physical organism weighing 130 pounds—possibly exists without being a physical organism. Put another way, on the view under consideration, the words “my body” pick out at this world an object that

is a spatially extended physical organism and at another world pick out the very same object, but that object, at that world, is not a physical organism, is not spatially extended, is not in any way physical.

As I said, this is *prima facie* absurd. This does not amount to an argument against the view under consideration. But the important question is this: Are there any good reasons for accepting (iv)? Merricks suggests that there are. He claims that a physicalist committed to the necessity of identity claims who becomes convinced that possibly, she exists but no physical thing exists *should* believe it *if* she wants to continue to hold that she is identical with her body. Maybe so. But is this a *good* reason for accepting (iv)? I think not. For (iv) has all the appearance of being ad hoc and expedient. For it looks as though the identity theorist is grasping at one extremely implausible claim—possibly, my body exists and no physical thing exists—in order to salvage a claim that is highly controversial, even among physicalists, namely, I am identical with my body.<sup>8</sup> And it appears that she is forced to such extreme measures because she has become convinced of a claim that is at least as controversial as, and according to some more implausible than, either (iv) or (PB) themselves, namely, possibly, I exist but no physical thing exists.<sup>9</sup>

Given this nesting of implausibility and controversy, and given the absence of any independent reasons for believing it, i.e., reasons independent of (ii) and (PB), I maintain that until such reasons are forthcoming a physicalist ought to refrain from accepting (iv), and so refrain from believing the conjunction of (i), (ii) and (PB).

Rejecting Merricks' argument against (iii) does not force upon us a priori arguments for dualism. Such arguments depend partly on (ii), a thesis that is controversial at best. Suppose you believe that both (ii) and (PB) are false. Is there a position that can accommodate the rejection of each of (ii) and (PB), and if so where on the spectrum of available theories will such a position fall?

## 2. An Alternative to Person-Body Identity and Cartesian Dualism

For starters, such a position will have to be neither a version of Cartesian dualism nor a version of reductionistic physicalism. There is an alternative to traditional dualism and reductive materialism that may fill the bill. For instance, one could side with Lynne Rudder Baker and argue that persons and bodies stand in the constitution relation one to the other:<sup>10</sup> persons are constituted by bodies in much the same way as statues are constituted by masses of clay, as dollar bills are constituted by pieces of paper. And despite Noonan's claim to the contrary, there are good reasons for believing that constitution is not identity.<sup>11</sup>

For example, consider the statue and the mass of clay. It is possible that the mass of clay survive changes that would terminate the existence of the statue, and likewise changes through which the statue could persist that would terminate the existence of the mass of clay composing it. For example, extreme heat or repeated blows with a sledge hammer might destroy the statue but not the mass of clay. Moreover, it is true of the mass of clay but not of the statue that it can survive being scattered. A thing and itself cannot have different persistence conditions but the

mass of clay and the statue can, since one can survive changes that the other cannot. Therefore, the two are not identical. Going in the other direction, most of us believe that it is possible for the statue to survive the loss of those of its material parts which make up (say) its nose or ears, but not possible for the mass of clay to survive that same loss of material parts. Since a statue can but a mass of clay cannot survive a gain or loss of material parts the two are *two* and so not identical.<sup>12</sup>

According to a metaphysics of constitution, the relata, i.e., the constituting object and the constituted object, are (i) spatially coincident, (ii) fall under different sortals and (iii) have different persistence conditions, owing to (ii).<sup>13</sup> Since constitution is a relation between things falling under different sortals, constitution is not a reflexive relation. Nor is constitution symmetric. The mass of clay, for example, constitutes the statue, not the other way round. Constitution is, however, a transitive relation. If the mass of clay is constituted by some atoms and the statue is constituted by the mass of clay, then the statue is constituted by those same atoms.

On a constitution account of persons, then, persons are constituted by bodies but are not identical with the bodies that constitute them. How does this go? Let us say, first of all, that persons (human or otherwise) are, *minimally*, beings with a capacity for intentional states: believing, desiring, intending, etc. Some of these intentional states must be irreducibly first-person; if a being lacks the capacity to think of itself in an irreducibly first-person way, then that being, whatever it is, is not a person. *Human* persons, more specifically, are essentially bodily beings insofar as they are constituted by biological bodies.

By *biological body* I mean first of all a *physical organism*. Physical organisms, for their part, are constituted by masses of cell-stuff. As I am using the term "biological body" I mean to distinguish it from the mass of cell-stuff that constitutes it. The one but not the other is a mere *mass* or aggregate. And a mass just is a mereological sum. Therefore, the one but not the other is able to survive material part replacement.

What I mean by "physical organism" is roughly what Locke meant by "living animal". An animal, said Locke, is a living organized body.<sup>14</sup> And [a] "man", "nothing but a participation of the same continued Life by constantly fleeting particles of matter, in succession vitally united to the same organized Body."<sup>15</sup> Now by "Life" I take Locke to have meant an individual biological event of a very special sort, a sort that is remarkably stable, well individuated, self-directing, self-maintaining and homeodynamic. The Lockean way of expressing what a living animal is has echoes in contemporary philosophical discussion. Thus van Inwagen takes organisms to be "things that are composed of objects whose activities constitute lives",<sup>16</sup> where once again by "life" van Inwagen means the special sort of self-directing biological event just mentioned.

If this is right, then we might offer the following criterion of identity for physical organisms:

If  $x$  and  $y$  are physical organisms, then  $x$  is identical with  $y$  iff  $x$



and *y* are constituted by (sets of) physical simples participating in the same continued life.

Now one reason for denying that persons are identical with the physical organisms that constitute them is that the sortals "person" and "physical organism" have different persistence conditions associated with them. For example, there is nothing in the criterion of identity for an organism that involves having intentional states. Therefore, there is no conceptual impossibility involved in thinking about my physical organism continuing to exist while completely lacking a capacity for intentional states; if what I said above is true, however, then there is such an impossibility involved in the idea of *my* continuing to exist while lacking all capacity for intentional states. For I am a person.

Human persons, therefore, on a constitution account of them, are *physical* objects, where an object is physical just in case either it is itself a physical simple or wholly constituted by physical simples. Thus, human persons are not immaterial minds or souls. Nor are human persons identical with their constituting bodies. Human persons are physical objects numerically and sortally distinct from the physical objects that constitute them.

### 3. Christian Theism and A Constitution Account of Persons

There are many possible objections to a constitution account of medium sized physical objects like persons. For example, it has been argued that such an account unnecessarily multiplies objects, properties and, in the case of persons, thinkers.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, given its entailment of coincident physical objects, it might be argued that constitution is inconsistent with microphysical supervenience, at least as that doctrine is ordinarily understood. For according to constitution, the spatially coinciding objects will be intrinsically indistinguishable at the microphysical level insofar as their constituting atoms will be intrinsically and numerically identical and stand in the same atom to atom relations. Still, the constitution theorist maintains, the two objects differ in intrinsic qualitative properties. For example, in the case of persons, one object thinks and the other doesn't. The doctrine of microphysical supervenience, on the other hand, is generally understood to entail that two things intrinsically indistinguishable at the microphysical level will be indistinguishable *tout court*. So it appears as though constitution and microphysical supervenience are incompatible. Moreover, some have strenuously objected that the identity conditions for the objects involved in the putative relation of constitution appear to be just brute facts about them.<sup>18</sup> But there must be *some* (presumably material) fact about each of "them" that grounds "their" numerical difference and explains "their" non-identity. Constitution theorists, it is charged, fail both to ground the numerical difference and explain the non-identity of the two objects alleged to stand in the constitution relation. I have addressed these and other like objections in some detail elsewhere and so will not do so here.<sup>19</sup> Let it suffice to say that I do not find any of these objections to pose a serious threat to a constitution account of medium sized physical objects like

persons. What I want to focus on here are possible objections of a more theological nature. For it might be argued that a constitution account of persons is at odds with certain doctrines of Christian theism.

Although I do not believe Christian theism entails a *single* view on the question of the relation between persons and bodies, I do suppose that at a minimum in order for an answer to be compatible with Christian theism it must be compatible with belief in the resurrection of the dead, with an afterlife or survival. So we can sharpen our question: Is a constitution account of human persons compatible with Christian belief in the resurrection; and if so, what is it in virtue of which a person who exists at a time after my death is identical with me, on such a view?

The answer to the first of these questions is, I believe, yes: a constitution view of persons is compatible with Christian belief in the resurrection. What I want to do in the remainder of the paper is first suggest a plausible answer to the second question by offering a general account of the persistence conditions for persons and bodies that allows for resurrection and then address several questions raised by that account.

#### 4. Spatiotemporal Continuity and Persistence

Let us call objects that persist through time *continuants*. Persons are paradigm instances of such. There are competing accounts of how material objects persist through time. Some believe that physical objects persist by *perduring*, i.e., by being sums of temporally extended parts. Others, myself included, believe that physical objects persist by *enduring*, i.e., by being wholly present at each of the times they exist. It has long been thought, by perdurantists and endurantists alike, that some form of spatiotemporal continuity is not only sufficient to secure the persistence of continuants, but also necessary. C.D. Broad, for example, who defended a perdurantist view of continuants, articulates such a view in his *Perception, Physics and Reality*<sup>20</sup> and Russell, at least at one time, seems to have embraced it too. Thus Russell:

It is to be observed that in a series of events which common sense would regard as belonging to one 'thing,' the similarity need only be between events not widely separated in space-time. There is not very much similarity between a three months's embryo and an adult human being, but they are connected by gradual transitions from next to next, and are therefore accepted as stages in the development of one 'thing.'<sup>21</sup>

Spatiotemporal continuity, however, does not seem to be a necessary condition for the persistence of at least some sorts of physical thing. Consider my lawn mower, for example. We can imagine my lawn mower being taken in for repairs, being thoroughly dismantled with its different parts being repaired on different floors of the shop, then those very same parts being collected and reassembled in a different room of the shop than the room to which the lawn mower was originally taken. I think we should nevertheless be inclined to say that the lawn mower I took in for repairs is the lawn mower I received back. Yet, if that is so,

then it is plausible to suppose that my lawn mower can retain its identity through radical spatiotemporal discontinuity. For it seems plausible to say of my lawn mower that its existence is *temporally* discontinuous, that it went out of existence for some period of time and later came back into existence. And assuming my lawn mower cannot exist as a widely scattered object, I think it equally plausible to suggest that its existence is *spatially* discontinuous as well, that it went out of existence in one part of the factory and was reassembled and brought back into existence in another.

Similar scenarios can be imagined which seem to show that spatiotemporal continuity is not sufficient for survival either, at least for some sorts of physical thing. For ordinarily we are inclined to judge that two non-identical objects can occupy the same spatiotemporally continuous path. Imagine, for example, that before us stands a wood table. Imagine we watch as that table is filed down until all that remains is a heap of sawdust. The heap-of-sawdust is spatiotemporally continuous with the wood table, but is not identical with it. And so with golden statues that get melted down to puddles-of-gold and logs that burn and give way to smoldering ash. These examples strike us as examples of one object going out of existence and being replaced by others that are spatiotemporally continuous with the originals.<sup>22</sup> It seems, therefore, that spatiotemporal continuity is not sufficient to secure the persistence of at least some sorts of physical object.

### 5. The Persistence of Bodies

According to a constitution account of persons, persons are constituted by bodies. Bodies, as I understand them, are physical organisms. A physical organism is something such that other objects compose it in virtue of their activities constituting a life. Now what is it for an organism to persist? Organisms are not artifacts, as are the objects in the foregoing examples. So even if it is the case that spatiotemporal continuity is neither necessary nor sufficient for the survival of artifacts, it certainly does not follow straightaway that tracing human bodies along spatiotemporally continuous paths is neither necessary nor sufficient for *their* persistence.

There is good reason, however, to think that things stand with respect to the persistence of human bodies as they stand with respect to artifacts, that tracing a spatiotemporally continuous path is not sufficient, and perhaps not necessary either, for the survival of a body. Here's a reason for thinking that spatiotemporal continuity is not sufficient. It seems possible for God to totally annihilate a body at (say)  $t_2$  and replace it with a newly created molecular duplicate at precisely the same time, and in precisely the same place as the place occupied by the original body at the time of its annihilation.  $t_2$  would thus constitute the end of one body's existence and the beginning of a duplicate's existence, while the spatial region originally filled by the annihilated body would come to be wholly filled by a body numerically distinct from it. This seamless replacement of one body with another seems to suggest that spatiotemporal continuity is not sufficient for the persistence of bodies.<sup>23,24</sup>

Considerations like these have led some to maintain that spatiotemporal continuity is normally merely an upshot of persistence, not its ground.<sup>25</sup> What is absent in the simple spatiotemporal continuity criterion of persistence is any mention of the role of *causation*. Yet surely, if the apple on the table in front of me has persisted into the present then its existence in the immediate past must be causally relevant to its existence now. So too with human bodies. If the human body sitting before the computer at 2:59 is not causally connected with the one sitting there at 2:58, then it is plausible to think that the human body there at 2:59 is not a continuation of the body that was there at 2:58, but rather is a replacement.

Causal considerations, therefore, seem especially pertinent to the giving of persistence conditions for material objects of any sort. Of course the kinds of causal dependencies relating an object at earlier and later stages of its career will very likely differ according to the kind of object whose career we are tracing. Different kinds of persisting thing, in other words, have different persistence conditions. What it is in virtue of which a *human body* persists is different from what is in virtue of which a *table* persists. But even so, it is causal considerations that are relevant to the persistence of each.

Peter van Inwagen offers the following principle for the persistence of organisms.

[I]f the activity of the  $x$ s at  $t_1$  constitutes a life, and the activity of the  $y$ s at  $t_2$  constitutes a life, then the organism that the  $x$ s compose at  $t_1$  is the organism that the  $y$ s compose at  $t_2$  if and only if the life constituted by the activity of the  $x$ s at  $t_1$  is the life constituted by the activity of the  $y$ s at  $t_2$ .<sup>26</sup>

That the activities of the simples caught up in a life are *causal* activities seems certain, given the fact that a life, as we've said, is a self-preserving *event*. Restating van Inwagen's principle so as to make explicit the causal element involved, and with a view to arriving at a necessary condition for the persistence of an organism, we might say:

If an organism  $O$  at  $t_3$  is the same organism that existed at  $t_1$  (where  $t_1 < t_3$ ), then the (set of) simples that compose  $O$  at  $t_1$  must be causally related in the life-preserving way to the (set of) simples that compose  $O$  at  $t_3$ .

Let's call this necessary condition, **CR**. **CR** makes it a requirement on the persistence of an organism that immanent causal relations hold among the different stages of an organism's career.<sup>27</sup> And here we have what I think is a necessary condition for the persistence of a human body.

A human body  $B$  that exists at  $t_3$  is the same human body that exists at  $t_1$  just in case the temporal stages leading up to  $B$  at  $t_1$  are immanently causally connected to the temporal stage of  $B$  at  $t_3$ .<sup>28</sup>

Can we take these immanent causal connections and supplement them so as to arrive at necessary and *sufficient* conditions for the persistence of a body? Perhaps so; though we shall not try. For in order to do so we should have to offer an account of the persistence of an organism's constituting parts, and the parts of those parts, all the way down until we reach objects which are partless, assuming there are such. To attempt such a task here, however, would take us too far afield of my main interest, which is to say what the conditions are for the persistence of a *physical organism*, a body. And in order to do this it is enough to assume the persistence of those objects which compose it.

Now ordinarily immanent causal connections will give rise to spatiotemporal continuity, but they might not. If what I have said so far about the persistence of organisms is true, then the possibility of my body persisting through spatial jumps and temporal gaps has not been ruled out. Of course, it hasn't been ruled in either. What is required for an organism to persist through spatiotemporal gaps, however, is for it to be possible for immanent causal connections to cross such gaps. While there may be ways to make allowance for this, we shall not pause here to consider them.<sup>29</sup>

## 6. Resurrecting Persons

Assuming the persistence conditions for bodies suggested above, here is one way of making a constitution account of human persons compatible with Christian belief in the resurrection. Following Zimmerman, suppose the simples composing my body just before my death are made by God to undergo fission such that the simples composing my body then are causally related to two different, spatially segregated sets of simples. Let us suppose both are configured just as their common spatiotemporal ancestor. Suppose now that milliseconds after the fission one of the two sets of simples ceases to constitute a life and comes instead to compose a corpse, while the other either continues on in heaven or continues on in some intermediate state.<sup>30</sup> It looks to me like the defender of constitution has got all she needs in order to make a case for my continued existence, *post mortem*. For according to this story, the set of simples that at one time composed my constituting body stands in the right sort of causal relation—the Life-preserving causal relation—to the set of simples that either now compose my constituting body in heaven or compose my constituting body in an intermediate state.<sup>31</sup>

It might be suggested that what we have just now given is a partial account of the persistence of a physical organism into an afterlife but that we have not yet accounted for the persistence of the very object that organism is said to constitute, namely, me. True. But if a *necessary* condition for the persistence of a person is that her constituting physical organism persist and what is both necessary and *sufficient* for personal survival is that *this* persisting physical organism preserve its capacity to subserve a range of intentional states of the sort discussed earlier, then indeed we have accounted for the persistence of the person. A person persists, and persists into an afterlife, just in case her physical organism persists and preserves a capacity to subserve a range of intentional states, at least some of which must be irreducibly first-person.

While I do not claim that this is the only way of making sense of resurrection on a constitution account of human persons it does seem to be one plausible way of doing so. Moreover, this materialist account of resurrection, unlike van Inwagen's,<sup>32</sup> does not involve God in mass deception. The corpse composed of the set of simples that fails to perpetuate a life is no simulacrum—it really is the stuff that at one time constituted the person in question.

#### IV

### Problems and Questions

This view of the persistence of persons into an afterlife does, however, raise some questions and it appears to entail the denial of what seems to be a plausible principle of persistence, namely, what Noonan calls "the only *x* and *y*" principle, i.e., the claim that whether or not an object persists should have nothing to do with the goings-on outside the spatiotemporal path occupied by that object.

First the questions. Just what is to preclude my organism from persisting into an afterlife and coming to constitute a metaphysically distinct person in that life? Assuming that there is no problem in saying of a certain body that it is mine now, then there is no problem in saying of a certain body in the afterlife that it is mine then. This is so because if any body is my body, it is essentially my body. Human persons, therefore, cannot be constituted by bodies other than the bodies that do in fact originally constitute them. So there is no danger of you receiving my body in the afterlife or me yours, or either of us receiving *wholly* new bodies.<sup>33</sup>

According to a constitution account of persons, then, a person cannot be constituted by a physical organism numerically distinct from the one that actually does constitute her. But also on a constitution account of persons, a person's physical organism (in the present life) can exist without constituting any person at all, as may be the case during some stages of post-zygotic fetal development and, perhaps, when a well-formed adult's cerebrum suffers severe trauma without her brainstem being affected, as may result from an automobile accident. If the trauma suffered by one's cerebrum were such that it no longer was capable of subserving mental functioning, then it's plausible to believe that the person would cease to exist even though her physical organism would not. Her physical organism would not cease to exist since the brainstem is the command center of the autonomic nervous system, regulating metabolic processes and directing an organism's vital functions such as the circulation of blood and other vital fluids. The fact that it remains functionally intact, and in the right sort of environment, is sufficient for the persistence of one's physical organism. And this raises a question: will there be, on a constitution account of persons, post-resurrection human bodies that do not constitute any persons at all? There is reason to think not.

First consider the case of a body that constituted a person for a particular temporal stretch prior to resurrection but did not constitute any person for some subsequent pre-resurrection temporal stretch. What happens to *it* in the afterlife? Well it's plausible to believe that God brings it about that once again it constitutes the person it did at previous

times. The body would persist into the afterlife along the lines originally suggested, namely, as the result of fission, and God would restore to *that* body its capacity to subservise the sorts of intentional states necessary for it to constitute a person, the same person it constituted during periods of its pre-resurrection existence. Surely such is not beyond the reach of God's power and benevolence.

And what of a physical organism that never constitutes a person during its pre-resurrection existence, what becomes of it? The view that I find appealing is this: the person God had willed that body ultimately to constitute would come to be constituted by that body. Things would go with it in the afterlife the way God intended them to go. So while the ratio of bodies to persons may not be 1:1 in this present life, the number of bodies out-numbering the number of persons, things will not be so in the afterlife. Then things ultimately will be as God intended them to be and there will be more human persons around then than there were before.

I said earlier that there is a price to pay for this view of the persistence of persons. For even if things go the way I have suggested, then there will be some brief amount of time just after the fission but before the one set of simples comes to compose a corpse, when the simples composing my body are causally related to spatially segregated sets of simples. It looks, therefore, like my continued existence depends on one set of simples coming to compose a corpse. But if that is so, then my persistence depends on facts that lie outside the spatiotemporal path of the physical object that constitutes me and we violate the only *x* and *y* principle. This is a problem. But it must be recognized that it is not only a problem for the constitution theorist's beliefs about the persistence of persons into an afterlife; it is a problem for anyone who believes that, say, a person can survive the transplant of a single brain hemisphere without being able to survive a transplant of both hemispheres. For example, van Inwagen's metaphysics of human persons is open to this problem, since on his view a doubly successful brain transplant issues in the demise of a person.

### *Conclusion*

Whatever its deficiencies it seems a constitution account of human persons is compatible with belief in the resurrection. How plausible one finds the account of persistence presented here may partly depend on how plausible one finds a constitution account of persons. For those of us who are skeptical of both Cartesian dualism and person-body identity, a constitution view of persons is a welcome alternative.<sup>34</sup>

*Calvin College*

### NOTES

1. See for example Alvin Plantinga's *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), p. 68 and James Van Cleve "Conceivability and the

Cartesian Argument for Dualism," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, 64 (1983), pp. 35-45. "All extended things are essentially extended," plays the role of (iii) for Van Cleve whereas Plantinga holds "Anything that has M or M-Complement, has M essentially or has M-Complement essentially," where 'M' names the property of being a material object.

2. See "Descartes' Denial of Mind-Body Identity," in *Descartes: Critical and Interpretive Essays*, ed. Michael Hooker, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. 179. I have taken the liberty to substitute 'physical object' for 'material object' in Hooker's claim.

3. See Trenton Merricks, "A New Objection to A priori Arguments for Dualism," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 31 (1994), pp. 80-85.

4. Merricks, p. 81.

5. Merricks, p. 82.

6. Merricks, p. 83.

7. Merricks, p. 83.

8. In *How To Build A Person* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989) John Pollock defends the physicalist thesis that "persons are physical objects" but denies that persons are identical with their bodies. Pollock maintains that persons supervene on bodies but are not identical with the bodies on which they supervene. I think there are good reasons for denying that the relation between a person and her body is that of supervenience. See my *Persons and Bodies: The Metaphysics of Human Persons* (Ph.D Thesis, Purdue University, 1997), especially chapters 4 and 5.

9. It seems obvious to many that human persons cannot exist without bodies. If there are divine persons, then there are bodiless persons. But *human* persons, it might be suggested, are not divine persons; human persons seem not only to be embodied and essentially so, but also to be physical objects. So the claim that possibly, a human person exists but no physical object exists strikes many as exceedingly implausible.

10. "Need a Christian be Mind-Body Dualist," *Faith and Philosophy* 12 (1995), pp. 489-504.

11. See Noonan's "Constitution is Identity," *Mind* 102 (1993), pp. 133-146.

12. I adopt here what Dean Zimmerman calls a "sum theory of masses". See his "Theories of Masses and Problems of Constitution," *Philosophical Review* 104 (1995), pp. 53-111. The mass of clay that constitutes the statue is, on such a view, a composite, i.e., a mass of clay-stuff some of whose parts are themselves masses of clay-stuff. A clay-stuff simple would be a mass of some clay-stuff none of whose parts are themselves masses of clay-stuff. Thus, the mass of clay constitutive of the statue is a *sum* of masses of clay-stuff.

13. Formally x constitutes y only if: (i) x & y are spatially coincident, and (ii) there are different sortal properties  $\Phi$  &  $\Psi$ , and an environment E such that (a) ( $\Phi$ x & x is in E) & ( $\Psi$ y & y is in E) and (b) ( $\forall z$ ) [( $\Phi$ z & z is in E)  $\supset$   $\exists w$  ( $\Psi$ w & w is in E) & ( $w \neq z$ )]

14. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, XXVII, §5, ed. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

15. Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, XXVII, §6.

16. Peter van Inwagen, *Material Beings* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 92.

17. This problem is raised by Michael Burke, "Preserving the Principle of One Object to a Place: A Novel Account of the Relations Among Objects, Sorts, Sortals, and Persistence Conditions," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 54 (1994), p. 621; van Inwagen, *Material Beings*, pp. 126-127; and



Zimmerman, "Theories of Masses," p. 88.

18. See Burke, "Copper Statues and Pieces of Copper," *Analysis* 52 (1992), pp. 12-17 and Eric Olson, "Human People or Human Animals," *Philosophical Studies* 80 (1995), pp. 159-181, see especially p. 163; Zimmerman raises this objection too in "Theories of Masses," p. 87.

19. See my *Persons and Bodies: The Metaphysics of Human Persons*, *ibid.*, especially chapter 5.

20. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914), see especially pp. 102-3.

21. *Human Knowledge: It's Scope and Limits* (New York: Simon Schuster, 1948), p. 448. Russell later recognized that spatiotemporal continuity is not a sufficient condition for persistence, and so added a causal condition to his account. See his "The Relation of Sense-data to Physics," in *Mysticism and Logic* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1957) p. 165.

22. There are other concerns that lead to the abandonment of spatiotemporal continuity as a sufficient condition for the persistence of some objects. See, for example, Eli Hirsch's discussion in *The Concept of Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 25-33.

23. The idea of "smooth" replicas or "immaculate" replacements can be credited either to Shoemaker "Identity, Properties, and Causality," reprinted in *Identity, Cause and Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 234-260 or Armstrong "Identity Through Time," in *Time and Cause*, ed., by Peter van Inwagen (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1980), pp. 67-78.

24. Dean Zimmerman reminds me that those whose philosophical intuitions have been primed by heavy doses of Star Trek see nothing unseemly with the idea of spatially and temporally gappy existence either. For one might plausibly take it that the occupants of the starship Enterprise entering into the transporter jump discontinuously through space or perhaps even go out of existence for a time and emerge later elsewhere and elsewhen. If this is possible, then spatiotemporal continuity is not even a necessary condition for the persistence of bodies.

25. See for example David Armstrong's "Identity Through Time," p. 76.

26. van Inwagen, *Material Beings*, p. 145.

27. Such *stages* need not be thought of as temporal parts of the persisting organism; like the life lived by an organism, they need only be thought of as events. Thus, following Zimmerman, we can define "temporal stage of an organism" as follows:

$s$  is the temporal stage at  $t$  of an organism  $O$  =<sup>d</sup> there is a set  $R$  of all the intrinsic properties and internal relations  $O$  has at  $t$ , and  $s$  is the event of  $O$ 's exemplifying  $R$  at  $t$ .

See his "Immanent Causation," forthcoming in *Philosophical Perspectives* volume 11 (pagination not yet set) and also his unpublished manuscript "Resurrection for Materialists," which he presented to the Pacific APA in 1996. Whereas Zimmerman offers the definition of "temporal-stage" for objects in general, I have taken the liberty to make the relevant substitutions so that the definition applies to organisms in particular.

28. Immanent causation, then, is supposed to contrast with so called "transeunt causation," in that in the latter the state of one continuant,  $A$ , brings about state-changes in a numerically distinct continuant,  $B$ . In the former type of causation, however, a state  $x$  of thing  $A$  brings about a consequent state  $y$  in  $A$  itself. For more on the notion of immanent causation see Zimmerman's "Immanent Causation," forthcoming in *Philosophical*

*Perspectives*, Volume 11. For a definition of "temporal-stage," see previous footnote.

29. Dean Zimmerman considers them in his "Resurrection for Materialist," *ibid.*

30. We will assume not only that persons are essentially persons, but that being alive or conscious is a necessary condition for human personhood. Therefore, there is after the fissioning only one possible candidate for a person-constituting object since the surviving corpse is not a living organism and so not capable of subserving consciousness.

31. The account of resurrection presented here is a modification of the one entertained by Dean Zimmerman in his "Resurrection for Materialists," *ibid.* Zimmerman's account was intended to satisfy in toto the metaphysics of van Inwagen's *Material Beings*, a metaphysics that has no truck with the coincident physical objects that defenders of constitution believe to be prevalent throughout the material world.

32. See van Inwagen's "The Possibility of Resurrection," in Paul Edwards, ed., *Immortality* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1992), pp. 242-246.

33. It may be thought that this puts me at odds with a claim made by Baker in her "Need A Christian Be a Mind-Body Dualist." For she says there that while it is necessary that a human person be constituted by a body, it is not necessary that a human person be constituted by the body that presently constitutes her. If she means by body "physical organism," then we do in fact have a genuine disagreement. But I think that Baker means to pick out with the word "body" what I would rather pick out with the words "mass of cellular tissue" or "mass of cell-stuff" or some other such. If the latter is what Baker means there is no disagreement. For I too believe that we are constituted at different times by different masses of cell-stuff.

34. At different stages in the development of this paper I benefitted from the incisive comments of Michael Bergmann, Jan Cover, Thomas Flint, Shawn Floyd, Al Plantinga and Dave Vander Laan. Improvements also resulted from the comments of two anonymous referees for this journal. Ancestors of this paper were read to the Indiana Philosophical Association's 1997 Spring Meeting at Purdue University and the 1997 Midwest Regional Meeting of the Society of Christian Philosophers held at Calvin College. Finally, I wish to thank Bill Rowe for extensive written comments on, and correspondence concerning, earlier drafts of this paper.