

Cartesian and Neo-Cartesian Arguments for Dualism

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In the *First Meditation*, Rene Descartes relates his belief that “I am here, sitting by the fire, wearing a winter dressing-gown, holding this piece of paper in my hands, and so on” and then proceeds, while pursuing his program of methodological doubt and reconstruction, to give a series of arguments intended to prove the existence of God and the soul (Descartes, 1641, 13; AT VII, 19). Several of these arguments are for the conclusion that he is not identical to his body. In Descartes’ view, the “opposite” of bodies are souls, immaterial substances whose essence is to think and which are “by their nature incorruptible and cannot ever cease to exist unless they are reduced to nothingness by God’s denying his concurrence to them” (1641, 10; AT VII, 14). So, he holds, if he is not a body, he is an immortal soul.

Some three and a half centuries later, Alvin Plantinga imagines that he, presumably similarly seated, is also holding a paper in his hand, in this case the *South Bend Tribune*, and that, while reading the comic page, manages to survive an amazing series of changes to his body (Plantinga, 2006; cf. Plantinga, 1974, 67f.). Plantinga claims that this Replacement Argument shows that he is not a body and that materialism is false.

In this paper I propose to consider some arguments suggested by Descartes’ text, to show how they lead in a natural progression to Plantinga’s Replacement Argument, and to assess how they fare as arguments for the immortality of the soul.

1. Some Initial Cartesian Arguments

Among the hypotheses for doubting that Descartes introduces in the *First Meditation* is his

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famous appeal to dreaming:

Suppose then that I am dreaming, and these particulars—that my eyes are open, that I am moving my head and stretching out my hands—are not true. Perhaps, indeed, I do not even have such hands or such a body at all. (1641, 13; AT VII, 20)

This hypothesis is followed by an even more extreme one, that Descartes is the victim of some malicious demon of the utmost power and cunning [who] has employed all his energies in order to deceive me. I shall think that the sky, the air, the earth, colors, shapes, sounds, and all external things are merely the delusions of dreams which he has devised to ensnare my judgment. I shall consider myself as not having hands or eyes, or flesh, or blood or senses, but as falsely believing that I have all these things. (1641, 15; AT VII, 22-23)

When he takes up these doubts in the *Second Meditation*, Descartes asks,

Am not I, at least, something? But I have just said that I have no senses and no body. This is the sticking point: what follows from this? Am I not so bound with a body and with senses that I cannot exist without them? But I have convinced myself that there is absolutely nothing in the world, no sky, no earth, no minds, no bodies. Does it now follow that I too do not exist? No: if I convinced myself of something then I certainly existed. (1641, 16-17; AT VII, 24-25)

When Descartes replies to the suggestion that he cannot exist without his body with a resounding ‘No’, he may think that he has just given a reason for that claim. Perhaps his argument is as simple as the following:

Argument A

(1) It is conceivable that I exist and my body does not exist.

∴ (2) I am not identical to my body.²

We will discuss this argument in this simple form, but we should note that it, and the variations to be considered below, can each stand for a cluster of different arguments. For example, some people who deny dualism might think that we are identical to just a part of our bodies, for example, to our brains or to our brains and brain stems. Descartes' supposition that he exists even though no material things exist would also allow him to formulate parallel arguments for the conclusion that he is not identical to his brain, or to his brain and brain stem. Others who deny the existence of immaterial souls might think that we are *constituted* by our bodies. Presumably Descartes would contend that the conceivability of his existence apart from any material objects would also provide for parallel arguments for the conclusion that he is not constituted by any material object. So let us consider just the single version, keeping in mind when it becomes necessary, that variations on this argument are available.

The first thing to notice is that this argument is invalid. I have one sister, she is younger than me, and I am her only older brother. But it is conceivable that I exist and she does not. I can conceive of my existing without her (and without having any other sister). Then the premiss of the following argument is true, but its conclusion is false:

Argument B

² I am less concerned with Cartesian exegesis than with uncovering arguments suggested by his text. In the *Sixth Meditation* Descartes, however, does give an argument that appeals to premiss (1), supplemented by the additional claim that God can make distinct any things I can conceive of as separated (1641, 54; AT VII, 78). For additional Cartesian arguments for dualism, see (Zimmerman 1991).

(1') It is conceivable that I exist and my sister's older brother does not.

∴ (2') I am not identical to my sister's older brother.

So this argument is invalid.

Perhaps the argument can be improved if we recast it in terms of possibility (logical or metaphysical possibility), rather than in terms of conceivability:

Argument C

(3) It is possible that I exist and my body does not exist.

∴ (2) I am not identical to my body.

After all, deriving the conclusion from the assertion of conceivability presumably requires the *possibility* that I am not my body, and the claim that it is conceivable that I exist and my body does not is naturally taken as *evidence* for this possibility.³

Unfortunately, this argument is invalid as well, as a simple variation on our last counterexample shows. It is possible that I exist and have no sister. So the premiss of the following argument is true but its conclusion remains false—I *am* my sister's older brother.

Argument D

(3') It is possible that I exist and my sister's older brother does not.

∴ (2') I am not identical to my sister's older brother.

The problem is that (3') is true in virtue of the *de dicto* possibility that obtains, namely, that the proposition

(4) I exist and my sister's older brother does not

is possibly true. But it does not follow from this that I and my sister's older brother, that is, me,

³ But see the essays in (Gendler and Hawthorne, 2002) for complications and dissenting positions on this claim.

are actually distinct. That would indeed follow from the *de re* possibility of my existing and my sister's older brother not. That is, (4) does follow from

(3") I and my sister's older brother are possibly such that the former exists and the latter does not.

But the *de re* version, (3"), is false.

Could the original argument be salvaged by recasting it in *de re* terms? Could (3*) be shown to be true?

(3*) I and my body are such that it is possible that the former exists but the latter does not.

After all, it plausible to think that

(2) I am not identical to my body

does indeed follow from (3*). But should we accept (3*)? In the next section we will look at a Cartesian argument for (3*).

2. Mereological Essentialism and Dualism

In the Synopsis of the *Meditations* Descartes makes the following interesting claim:

For even if all the accidents of the mind change, so that it has different objects of the understanding and different desires and sensations, it does not on that account become a different mind; whereas a human body loses its identity merely as a result of a change in the shape of some of its parts. And it follows from this that while the body can very easily perish, the mind is immortal by its very nature" (Descartes, 1641, 10; AT VII, 14).

The idea seems to be that the mind or the soul can persist through various changes, but the body cannot. Descartes' example of a change in the body is a change in the shape of some of its parts.

It seems implausible, however, that one's body cannot survive, say, the flexing of one's arm, despite the fact that this would involve a change in shape of certain muscles. But a body does routinely change, not merely with respect to the shape of its parts, but with respect to which parts it has. Perhaps that fact can be used to construct an argument for dualism.

Roderick Chisholm has defined *extreme mereological essentialism* as the claim that parts are essential to their wholes. More formally,

(ME) For every x and y , if x is ever a part of y , then y is necessarily such that x is part of y at any time that y exists. (Chisholm, 1975, 478; see also Chisholm, 1974)

According to (ME), then, if a body loses a part, as bodies often do, that body ceases to exist.

This principle can be exploited to construct a different argument:

Argument E

(6) I can survive the loss of a part of my body.

(7) My body cannot survive the loss of a part of my body.

∴ (2) I am not identical to my body. (6), (7), and the Indiscernibility of Identicals⁴

But (7) is wholly implausible. Our bodies do not pop out of existence (to be replaced by a new body) if we get a haircut or even if we undergo an appendectomy. More generally, (ME) itself not especially compelling. Indeed, its main virtue seems to be that plausible alternatives to it are hard to come by.

Chisholm considers one such alternative that he calls “complete, unbridled mereological inessentialism”, according to which

(MI) There is no x and no y such that y is necessarily such that it ever has x as a part.

⁴ $(x=y) \rightarrow (\forall F)(Fx \equiv Fy)$.

(Chisholm 1976, 147)

Chisholm objects to (MI) by claiming that “if extreme mereological inessentialism is true, then this table, my left foot, and the Grand Central Station are three things which are such that there is a possible world in which the first is made up of the second and third—in which *this table* is made up of what, in this world, are my left foot and the Grand Central Station” (1976, 148), a claim Chisholm rightly regards as implausible. It is not clear that the thesis that nothing has any of its parts essentially has the consequence that anything could have anything for a part.⁵ Perhaps my car could have lacked any of the parts it actually has but there is no possible world where it is made of ice cream and poolaki. Nevertheless, if none of a thing’s parts is essential to it, it will be very difficult to generate a Cartesian-style argument for dualism that depends on my body ceasing to exist while I continue on, since such an argument requires some constraint on the identity of bodies over time.

So let us ask whether there a sensible alternative between the alternatives of extreme mereological essentialism and unbridled mereological inessentialism? And would a more moderate mereological essentialism still be of use in formulating an argument for dualism? In the following sections I will provide a rough formulation of moderate mereological essentialism, and I will then go on to interpret Plantinga’s “Replacement Argument” as an argument for dualism that appeals to it.

3. Moderate Mereological Essentialism

Perhaps things, including bodies, can survive the loss of *some* of their parts, even if they could not survive a wholesale or complete loss of parts. A sudden or nearly instantaneous loss of all of

⁵ I am indebted to Muhammad Legenhausen for helping me appreciate this point.

a thing's parts would be the end of that thing; a thing that lost all of its parts all at once, say, by splitting into many tiny pieces, would simply fail to exist then. But things ought to be able to survive at least some kinds of gradual loss and replacement of parts. What I will call *moderate mereological essentialism* imposes a simple constraint on such a process: if a thing successively loses parts, possibly having the lost parts replaced, then if there comes a time when the resulting object has no part in common with the original object, the original object is no more. For example, if I replace the windshield wipers on my car, the car continues to exist. But if I first replace the wipers, and then the headlights, and then the engine, and so on, until there comes a time at which no part of the resulting vehicle was original, then my car would no longer exist.

Perhaps we can formulate moderate mereological essentialism, at least to a first approximation, as follows:

(MME) Necessarily, for every x and y and for all times t and t' , if there is no z such that z is a part of x at t and z is a part of y at t' , then at t' x is not identical to y .⁶

According to (MME), the successive replacement of all of the parts of my car results in a *different* car, because the car that results at the end of the process has no part in common with the original car.⁷

⁶ A qualification may have to be introduced in order to accommodate *organisms*, which are able to *assimilate* new parts in a way that permits them to survive a complete replacement of parts. (For a brief description of such assimilation, see van Inwagen (1990, 94 ff.)) The “micro” version of Plantinga’s Replacement Argument, which I will mention below, seems to require such a modified principle. Inasmuch as the issues I am discussing do not depend on getting the details of a revised principle correct, I will not attempt to do so here.

⁷ Richard Swinburne seems to endorse (MME) in this passage: “If a substance S_2 at a time t_2 is to be the same

4. Plantinga's Replacement Argument (Macro Version)

Plantinga's Replacement Argument, like the arguments in Descartes' *Meditations*, is stated in the first person. Presumably each of us could affirm corresponding premisses about ourselves, with the result that we each have an argument for the conclusion that we are not identical to our bodies. I will discuss the argument in the form Plantinga gives it, frequently writing in the first-person myself. He begins by introducing a proper name, 'B', for his body.⁸ The heart of the argument, then, is an imagined scenario:

A familiar fact of modern medicine is the possibility and actuality of limb and organ transplants and prostheses. You can get a new heart, liver, lungs; you can also get knee, hip, and ankle replacements; you can get prostheses for hands and feet, arm and legs, and so on. Now it seems possible—possible in that broadly logical sense—that medical science should advance to the point where I remain fully dressed and in my right mind (perhaps reading the *South Bend Tribune*) throughout a process during which each of the macroscopic parts of my body is replaced by other such parts, the original parts being . . .

substance as a substance S_1 at an earlier time t_1 it must (of logical necessity) be made of the same matter as S_1 , or at least of matter obtained from S_1 by gradual replacement. If my desk today is to be the same desk as my desk last year it must be made largely of the same wood. . . . But the desk would not be the same desk if all the wood had been replaced" (Swinburne 1986, 153).

⁸ Using the first-person personal pronoun to refer to himself and the proper name 'B' to refer to his body helps Plantinga avoid one of the problems we found in one of our attempts to formulate Descartes' argument, namely, that of asserting a premiss that is true only taken *de dicto* and not *de re*. I will also use 'B' to refer to *my* body, when presenting claims of the argument *in propria persona*; it should be clear from the context whose body is being referred to.

annihilated. . . . But if this process occurs rapidly—during a period of 1 microsecond, let's say—B will no longer exist. I, however, will continue to exist, having been reading the comic page during the entire process. (2006, 4-5)

Plantinga adds some extra details for the replacement of his brain. We are to imagine, first, that one hemisphere of my brain [is] dormant at any given time, the other hemisphere doing all that a brain ordinarily does. At midnight . . . all the relevant 'data' and 'information' is transferred via the corpus callosum from the one hemisphere—call it 'H₁'—to the other hemisphere—H₂—whereupon H₂ takes over operation of the body and H₁ goes dormant. (2006, 5)

Imagine, as Peter van Inwagen (2006, 193) suggests in his presentation of the argument, a partition of B into largish, visible, non-overlapping parts. Then the imagined replacement is to proceed as follows: in any order, saving the two hemispheres of the brain for last, each of these parts is replaced by a new part—a leg for a leg, an arm for an arm, etc., and immediately thereafter the old part is annihilated. Then, just before midnight, whichever of the two hemispheres of the brain that is then dormant is replaced with a new hemisphere, ready to receive the information then stored in the active, opposite hemisphere. As soon as the midnight transfer is completed, the receiving hemisphere is activated, and the other, now dormant hemisphere is replaced with a duplicate. As with the other parts replaced first, the original hemispheres of the brain are also annihilated. Plantinga concludes, “in a period of time as brief as you like, therefore, both hemispheres will have been replaced by others, the original hemispheres and all of their parts annihilated. . . . Throughout the whole process I serenely continue to read the comics,” and he adds, “This suffices, I think, to show that it's possible that I

exist when neither my body nor any part of it exists” (2006, 5).

If it is possible that I exist when my body does not, it follows, by the Indiscernibility of Identicals,⁹ that I am not identical to my body. For if it is possible that I exist when my body does not, then I have the property of *possibly existing when B does not*, a property *B* lacks. But how exactly does the imagined scenario *show* that it is possible that I exist when my body does not? I think that it is supposed to do so because it is supposed to lend its support to the following argument:

The Replacement Argument

- (8) It is possible that all of the parts of *B* are replaced by different parts (and the original parts are annihilated) while I continue to exist.
- ∴ (9) It is possible that *B* ceases to exist while I continue to exist. (9) and (MME)
- ∴ (10) It is possible that I exist and *B* does not. (9)
- ∴ (11) I am not identical to *B*. (10) and the Indiscernibility of Identicals

The sole premiss of this argument is (8). In the state of affairs which (8) claims to be possible, I continue to exist although *B* does not, because by the end of the process of replacing the parts of *B*, *B* no longer exists. (MME) provides a reason for this last claim, because no part of the body that results from the replacement of parts was a part of *B* at the outset. So that body is not identical to *B*. But since all of *B*'s parts have been annihilated, *B* no longer exists at all.¹⁰ Hence,

⁹ See note 3 above.

¹⁰ Building in the condition, as Plantinga does, that the parts of *B* are annihilated after they are replaced rules out the alternative that *B* does continue to exist, but only as a “scattered object”. The term is due to Richard Cartwright (1975).

(9). But if *B* ceases to exist, although I still exist, as (9) says, then (10) is true. Finally, (11) follows, as we have seen, by the Indiscernibility of Identicals.¹¹

5. The Replacement Argument (Micro Version)

Plantinga gives a second version of his argument in which the replacement is not of “largish, visible, non-overlapping parts” but of microscopic parts. He writes,

It seems entirely possible that the cells of which my body is composed be rapidly—within a microsecond or two—replaced by other cells of the same kind, the original cells being instantly destroyed. It also seems entirely possible that this process of replacement take place while I remain conscious, thinking about dualism and marveling at some of the appalling arguments against it produced by certain materialists. Then I would exist at a time at which *B* did not (2006, 5).

This version is not as easily motivated by appeal to “the possibility and actuality of limb and organ transplants,” since replacing each of the approximately 10^{14} cells in a human body is

¹¹ Plantinga had presented a version of this argument already in his (1974), where it is embedded in a passage that gives several different arguments for dualism. He wrote,

. . . it certainly seems possible that I should acquire a new body—either by exchanging bodies with someone else, or by having *B* [i.e., that thing which is in fact my body] replaced in one fell swoop or *piece by piece by another body*—perhaps one made of some synthetic or more durable material. But then clearly it is possible that I acquire a new body and continue to exist while *B* is destroyed. Accordingly there is a time *t* at which it is possible that I exist and *B* does not. That is to say, there is a possible world *W* such that in *W* I exist at *t* and *B* does not exist at *t*. Hence, I have the property *exists at t in W*; *B* lacks that property. By the Indiscernibility of Identicals, therefore, it follows that I am not identical with *B*. But then surely there is no material object at all with which I am identical [emphasis added] (67f.).

nowhere near the grasp of modern medicine. But the appeal to medical advances is not really needed, however, because it is the logical or metaphysical *possibility* of such replacement that is claimed in the argument. And this version of the argument does have a significant advantage: it can appeal to an improved version of (MME), one that allows that organisms can survive throughout a complete replacement of parts, provided that each of the new parts is assimilated or taken up into the life of the organism in the right way—if, in Plantinga’s phrase, the parts “coalesce” into a body. In Plantinga’s presentation, the possible replacement of cells is assumed to occur faster than cells could be assimilated into an organism, so the body that results from the replacement satisfies neither the condition of having some parts in common with *B* nor the condition of deriving from *B* via assimilation of new parts. Despite this feature, I will not attempt to formulate the micro argument in more detail, nor will I attempt to state the requisite principle of diachronic identity. The points I want to make can be made about the original macro argument.

6. Do I Survive?

As we noted at the outset, the Replacement Argument is designed to be adaptable to whatever material thing anyone thinks we are identical to, made up of, or constituted by. But there is one materialist view to which the argument seems not to be adaptable. Roderick Chisholm famously defended the hypothesis that we are each “literally identical with some proper part of [our] macroscopic body” that is likely to “be something of a microscopic nature, and, presumably . . . located within the brain.” We are, in short, “certain material particles or subparticles . . . that are incorrupted and remain incorrupted as long as the person survives” (Chisholm 1978, 31).

On Chisholm’s view, I cannot survive some step in the replacement. This is perhaps

easiest to see in the first case, that of macroscopic replacement. If I am a tiny particle located in a larger part of my body, when that part is removed and annihilated, I would be annihilated with it. If I am a minute material thing located, for example, in the left hemisphere of my brain, then when the process of replacement reaches the point of replacing that hemisphere and annihilating it, I would be annihilated, too.¹² Accordingly, it would *not* be possible that all of the parts of B are replaced by different parts (and the original parts are annihilated) while I continue to exist, and so premiss (8) is false. By similar reasoning, I could not survive the proposed process of cellular replacement. If I am a tiny particle located somewhere inside of my body, then I am presumably located inside of one of the cells making up my body. So when that cell is removed and annihilated, I would be annihilated with it. I do not mean to endorse Chisholm's theory; in fact, I know of no one who accepts it, difficult as it may be to refute it. I mention it as one way in which someone might deny (8), the first premiss of the argument.

Peter van Inwagen (2007) also, in effect, denies (8). He agrees "that a sufficiently rapid

¹² I have been putting this point, informally, in counterfactual terms, as though it were a question of what *would* happen if my body underwent this kind of replacement of its parts. But Chisholm's claim—or, rather, my representation of Chisholm's claim (since I do not know what he thought about this case)—is that

(12) All of the parts of B are replaced by different parts (and the original parts are annihilated) while I continue to exist.

is *impossible*, which is the denial of the premiss, (8), of the argument. Rewriting (12) as an explicit conjunction,

(12') All of the parts of B are replaced by different parts (and the original parts are annihilated) and I continue to exist throughout,

we can put Chisholm's point as the claim that the left conjunct of (12) entails the falsity of its right conjunct, so (12) is therefore impossible.

replacement of the parts of a living organism will destroy that organism—and, in particular, that the episode of rapid replacement that [Plantinga] mentions would destroy *B*” (2007, 196). But van Inwagen denies that he would exist at the end of the replacement:

If you asked me what I should expect, phenomenologically speaking, if I were about to be subjected to a replacement procedure like the one Plantinga has imagined, I would reply that (considerations pertaining to an afterlife aside) I should expect my consciousness to come to an abrupt end at the moment the replacements were made. My phenomenological expectations would be identical with those I should have if I were told that I was about to be vaporized by the explosion of a hydrogen bomb. And this is no mere bloodless conviction of the intellect. I value my own continued existence and continued consciousness as much as most people do, but I would sacrifice no present pleasure or other good (e.g., a sum of money that I might leave to my loved ones) to bribe the powers-that-be to substitute my undergoing the replacement procedure at *t* for my being vaporized at *t*. (2007, 197).

Van Inwagen considers an argument for the conclusion that he would persist throughout the replacement that appeals to the occurrence of one continuous act of consciousness that obtains throughout the replacement and which is supposed to justify that there is a single person existing throughout the episode. But he is not persuaded by this claim, either, holding instead that he would require evidence of a single person before admitting that a single act of consciousness occurs throughout the replacement.¹³

¹³ A different response to Plantinga's argument is available to the four-dimensionalist. (Van Inwagen notes that both he and Plantinga are endurantists, so he does not address the alternative.) According to four-dimensionalists, a

Van Inwagen apparently denies that

(12) All of the parts of B are replaced by different parts (and the original parts are annihilated) while I continue to exist

is possible.¹⁴ Why? Does not it at least *seem* that (12) *could be* true?

In Kurt Vonnegut's short story, "Unready to Wear", Dr. Ellis Konigswasser absent-mindedly walks into a lagoon and accidentally leaves his body behind. As he leaves the lagoon he notices firemen attempting to resuscitate someone (who looked unusually hideous). On his way home, however, Konigswasser realizes that it was his own body next to the lagoon. He goes back and reoccupies the body just as the firemen revive it. He then "walked it home . . . into his front closet, got out of it again, and left it there" (Vonnegut, 1970, 241). As the story develops, other people learn to step out of their bodies, and a storehouse of bodies is made available for people to borrow, when they feel like walking around in a body.

Is this scenario possible? It is certainly imaginable that one could slip out of one's body, after a faint in a different direction perhaps, and thus walk around unencumbered by tired

material object persists through time by perduring, that is, by having a temporal part at each time at which it exists. The perdurantist can say about the replacement case that, at each stage of replacement, the body existing then is the closest continuant of the body existing at the earlier stage, and thus the two stages are temporal parts of the same body. In that case, one's body does survive the replacements. Coupling this claim with van Inwagen's denial that he would survive, the replacement yields an opposite version of Plantinga's argument: I cannot survive the replacement procedure, but my body can; therefore, I am not identical to my body. Even if this were a satisfactory argument for the conclusion that I am not identical to my body, however, it would be of no help for supporting the claim that our *souls* can survive our deaths.

¹⁴ See n.11 above.

muscles and a little extra weight. But is this enough to ensure that something like this is possible? Is

(13) I step out of B and walk away while I continue to exist

really possible? A reason to think that is not is that, necessarily, we are required to use our bodies in order to walk—we walk by alternately moving our legs forward. So it is not possible to walk away, disembodied, from one's body. It might be objected that although *walking* requires having legs, *moving* does not. So perhaps it is possible to move away from one's body. That is, perhaps

(14) I move out of B and move away while I continue to exist

is possible. Or perhaps it is not: if, necessarily, we move (under our own power) only by moving our bodies, it would not be possible to move in a different direction from our bodies.

So maybe (13) and (14) are not possible, but perhaps (12) is. That is, it might be that moving or walking without a body is impossible but that existing without a body is possible. But how can we decide? In any event, I think that we have not found a decisive objection to the Replacement Argument. The most we are entitled to conclude, I think, is that the argument is not compelling. Someone could reasonably consider the premiss and fail to see that it is true. Of course, it hardly ever happens that a philosophical argument *is* compelling: clever people can often find reasons to reject premisses; philosophers with commitments to incompatible views will fail to be convinced of proposed objections. All the same, some philosophers might well think that the Replacement Argument is sound. So we should consider exactly what it establishes. We should look, in particular, at its bearing on the topics of this conference, namely, survival of death and the resurrection of the body.

7. What If I Am not My Body?

What if

(11) I am not identical to B

is true? Would it then follow that I could exist without a body? Would it show that my disembodied existence is possible?¹⁵ Not without further argument. For it is compatible with (11) that I am dependent on a body at every time that I exist.¹⁶ Plantinga acknowledges as much when he says that he “will not be arguing that it is possible that I (or others) can exist disembodied, with no body at all” (2006, 4). Thus, (11) by itself does not show that I will survive the destruction of my body.

Descartes is similarly circumspect about what he thinks his arguments show. He says that his “arguments are enough to show that the decay of the body does not imply the destruction of the mind, and are hence enough to give mortals the hope of an after-life” (1641, 10; AT VII, 14). It is not obvious that the conclusion of Descartes’ arguments really does imply that disembodied survival is possible. Perhaps, as Plantinga admits with respect to his argument, they merely show that Descartes is not identical to his body, leaving it open that his continued existence depends on having *some* body. But suppose Descartes is correct in his claim that the decay of the body does not imply the destruction of the mind. This claim is equivalent to the

¹⁵ I raise this question because I think that an “intermediate state” between death and resurrection requires *disembodied* existence. Some participants in the conference did not share that view; for them the question of interest is whether (11) supports *continued* existence, which I take up next.

¹⁶ Compare Lynne Baker’s summary of the “constitution” view of human persons: “. . . it is necessary that human persons are embodied; but it is not necessary that they have the bodies that they in fact have. Thus, the view . . . [holds] that persons are not identical to their bodies. . .” (Baker, 2007, 334).

claim that it is *possible* that the body ceases to exist but the mind does not. But how does this mere possibility justify any sort of hope? It is possible that I will win the lottery, but that mere possibility does not justify an attitude of hope.

One might think that since on Descartes' view of the soul, souls are indestructible and thus naturally immortal. That would justify a hope in the survival of death. Descartes' talk of souls being "by their nature incorruptible" even suggests such an interpretation. But in fact he is careful to add that such incorruptible souls "cannot ever cease to exist *unless they are reduced to nothingness by God's denying his concurrence to them*" [emphasis added] (1641, 10; AT VII, 14). Surely none of the arguments we have considered so much as address the question of whether God will continue to sustain souls in existence, since mere claims about persistence conditions do not bear on what God chooses to do.

8. Concluding Remarks about Resurrection

Dualism seems to me to be the correct view about the nature of human persons. But dualism as a metaphysical view about the natures of persons and their bodies, as we have just seen, does not by itself imply that human persons survive their deaths. Oscar Cullman once worried that Christian theists unthinkingly embrace the Platonic notion of immaterial souls, a view according to which souls are indeed naturally immortal and no miracle is required to keep them in existence. Cullman regarded this as "one of the greatest misunderstandings of Christianity" (Cullman, 1965, 9). The version of dualism suggested by the Cartesian and Replacement arguments does not yield the result that souls continue in existence without the need of divine support and sustenance, so they offer no encouragement of the mistake against which Cullman warned. But neither does dualism, by itself, offer any support of the doctrine Cullman was

concerned to defend, namely, the doctrine of resurrection. Dualism does not claim anything about the great value of being embodied (an importance that is perhaps what led the Apostle Paul to describe being disembodied as “naked” (II Corinthians 5: 3)). Nor does it claim anything about the miraculous, new creation to be wrought by God according to which “this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality” (I Corinthians 15: 53). Whether philosophy is ever the “hand-maiden of theology”, on the topic of the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting, it must leave the theological doctrines for revelation and not proof.¹⁷

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