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UNDERSTANDING ETERNAL LIFE

Stephen Voss

The aim is to develop an account of eternal life consistent with the New Testament and with contemporary insights concerning personal identity. Eternal life involves transformation within life and subsequent resurrection of the body. John Hick's theory is inconsistent with the New Testament and, like Derek Parfit's reductionism, leaves no room for survival of death. David Wiggins's work implies that survival requires that crucial parts of a human being persist post-mortem. Humans are animals, and these parts are parts of the body. So further development will require greater understanding of the human body.

Suppose that you took seriously both the New Testament and contemporary work on personal identity. What account of eternal life could you live with?

I raise the question neither to prove the truth of the answer that will emerge here nor to reduce it to absurdity—regardless of how things might look. I simply want to see more clearly the direction in which the above constraints lead.

I begin by sketching the New Testament's teaching concerning eternal life. I offer considerations in favor of a certain conception of the relation between human beings and their bodies. Then I examine John Hick's attempt at an account consistent with that teaching and that conception. I appropriate insights due to Derek Parfit in criticizing Hick, and insights due to David Wiggins in developing an improved account. Finally I suggest some conceptual resources, drawn from revisionary metaphysicians like Origin and Spinoza, for the treatment of difficulties. Throughout, from several sides, attention converges upon a specific metaphysical issue: the nature of the human body.

I. New Testament Sources

Eternal life in the New Testament has two faces. It faces this present life: it provides a renewed form of existence here and now. And it faces the future: it provides a distinctive form of survival of death.

First, eternal life alters existence here and now. Jesus says that those who believe have eternal life now, and that his own miraculous acts evince the presence of the Kingdom of God.¹ Paul says that for believers death has already begun to occur, and that believers are now capable of life in the

Spirit.² The best sign that a person possesses eternal life here and now is an inclination toward agape.³

Secondly, eternal life implies a distinctive form of survival of death. In a central doctrinal passage, I Corinthians 15, Paul argues unequivocally that the dead in Christ are to be raised. And *mere* survival is something less than eternal life. For resurrection is granted both to the just and to the unjust; and Jesus says that the unjust are to suffer "everlasting punishment," while the just will enjoy "eternal life."⁴

But eternal life is one phenomenon, not two. It touches the body both before and after death.⁵ Glorification following death is the culmination of a process that starts before death.⁶ Both pre-mortem and post-mortem aspects of eternal life are consequences of a single divine activity.

Another fundamental feature of eternal life is that it involves resurrection of the body rather than immortality of the soul. One of the most striking and revealing aspects of I Corinthians 15 is the question that Paul anticipates and then takes entirely seriously: "How are the dead raised? In what kind of body?" He sees no point in discussing *whether* those who are raised will have bodies. Unplatonically, he takes that for granted. Oscar Cullman has argued convincingly for this feature of eternal life, and I'll sketch and reinforce his argument here.⁸

While the New Testament distinguishes the soul (*psyche*) or inner person from the body (*soma*) or outer person, we must keep this distinction distinct from that between the spirit (*pneuma*) and the flesh (*sarx*). The spirit is "the power of creation," while the flesh is "the power of sin and death." Spirit and flesh each seek to control both the inner and outer person.⁹ For the New Testament the enemy is sin and death, not the body.¹⁰ Like eternal life, death has two faces. For death not only ends the present life, it is the source of spiritual darkness. That, speculates Cullman, is why death was fearsome to Jesus. The body is to be redeemed, given life through the Spirit.¹¹ When Jesus was raised from the dead, the result was not a discarnate existence but a resurrected body.¹² Paul takes that primordial fact as a model for the believer's state after death: it will involve the transformation and renewal of the body, not its abandonment.¹³

But now we need to deal with a difficulty which Donald Viney has raised in correspondence: isn't the very idea of surviving death contradictory? "It is odd to speak of death as if it were an event in life, even a very special event. Death is not an event, not something one 'goes through.' It is the end of life."

Death has two natural effects: (a) it brings an end to a person's existence; (b) it blights the manifold possibilities of a person's life beforehand. But the New Testament regards neither of these as essential to death; and that helps justify the usage of theologians for whom neither (a) nor (b) is part of what

the term "death" means. In fact, according to the passages cited in note 10, death will be "destroyed," "abolished," so that the features mentioned in both (a) and (b) will be significantly compromised: a person might undergo death and still possess life. Our problem is just to understand the nature of death's announced defeat. Let us return to that effort.

It is tempting to read Plato's soul-body dualism into the New Testament, but Cullman argues that it is also incorrect. For Plato, death is not something bad that happens to me; it is something bad that happens to my body. That outlook is foreign to the New Testament: "only he who apprehends with the first Christians the horror of death, who takes death seriously as death, can comprehend the Easter exultation of the primitive community."¹⁴

It is not a matter of controversy that the New Testament speaks of resurrection of the body. I will assume that Cullman has convinced us as well that it does not speak of immortality of the soul. Origen observed long ago that the term *asomaton*—"incorporeal"—is unknown in the Scriptures.¹⁶ Indeed, the New Testament teaches nothing of an incorporeal soul external to the body, and it treats survival of death as a divine gift rather than an essential attribute of human nature.¹⁵ Platonic dualism is not taught here.

II. *Understanding the Dependence Fact*

It is just as well that the New Testament speaks of resurrection of the body and not immortality of the soul. For there is one simple body of facts which I believe renders a wide range of dualistic views of the person extremely implausible. I shall label them collectively the *Dependence Fact*. Dualism's desperate position significantly limits the options for an account of eternal life. I shall offer three ways to see how people look in the light of the Dependence Fact, more in the spirit of Zen reminders than of rationally compelling demonstrations that these dualistic views are false.

ZR1. If you are a Platonic soul, why does a sharp blow on your head produce unconsciousness, and not just loss of control over your body?

ZR2. Plato suggests in the *Phaedo* that soul is to body as person is to suit of clothes. But why do we accept person-suit dualism? One good reason is that there are many personal operations unaffected by any damage to a person's suit, and there are many personal dysfunctions that leave the suit intact. If soul and body were really two distinct substances, then you would expect at least some of the soul's operations to remain unaffected by any harm to the body, and at least some dysfunctions of the soul not to be manifested in the body. But this is not the case.

ZR3. Perhaps a parable will give my point panache. Forget now the dusty notions of Soul and Body, and think instead of Sarah and Bardolf, seen through the eyes of a homely alien.

A vaguely hominoid creature is found wandering the fields. He is willing

to describe his own nature for us. "I contain two components, Sarah and Bardolf. They are responsible for everything I do. You can see Bardolf but not Sarah. Bardolf responds directly to external stimuli; Sarah responds only indirectly, via Bardolf. You can tell Sarah's responses only by watching Bardolf.

"Bardolf does lots of things on his own, without Sarah's help—things I've heard you call 'merely physiological.' But I'm especially attached to certain things that Sarah does alone or together with Bardolf, and since my name is Osmond, I call them 'O operations.' Sarah is not only closer to me than breath itself; her nature is entirely different than Bardolf's. It's clear to me that if Sarah does anything on her own it counts as an O operation."

The scientists studying Osmond form two camps. The tough-minded ones believe Sarah does no work at all, and that every O operation is done by Bardolf alone. The tender-minded ones take Osmond at his word. The scientists try to settle their dispute by questioning Osmond further. Here's all they can get from him.

"I can tell whether many O operations are going on without observing Bardolf in the way you must. I have a special set of organs that let me look within myself, and they yield information about my O operations that pretty much squares with your own. I can tell that some large shadowy mass within me is at work producing—at least helping to produce—those operations. I've always assumed that that mass was Sarah, but the view is so hazy that for all I can tell it's just part of Bardolf."

The two camps of scientists remain far apart. Each camp can easily interpret Osmond's latest deliverance consistently with its own view. In desperation they call in a philosopher—you. They summarize their experimental findings for you:

F1. Sometimes the O operations break down in different ways. Any such breakdown can be traced back to something that has gone wrong within Bardolf.

F2. We can induce any known type of breakdown in an O operation by damaging Bardolf in just the right way.

Deep in thought, you assume your armchair. At length you write your conclusions.

C1. If Sarah does help produce any of Osmond's O operations, there is a thorough-going correlation between Sarah's and Bardolf's work in producing it. For each O operation, there is a characteristic piece of work that Bardolf does; on the other hand, everything Sarah does duplicates something Bardolf does.

C2. None of the scientists who accept Osmond's story can explain that correlation.

C3. Therefore Sarah plays no part in producing Osmond's O operations. Bardolf is responsible for them all.

C4. In fact, there's no reason to believe that Sarah even exists.

You tell the scientists—and Osmond. Osmond feels bereft. Sarah is gone. Osmond must allow Bardolf to take her place, and acknowledge that it is just Bardolf who does everything he thought Sarah did or the two of them did together.

Osmond's O operations remain, as magical as ever. Perhaps a clearer understanding of them is now possible. An interesting and intimate correlation indeed exists—not between Sarah's work and Bardolf's, but between some of Bardolf's work and Osmond's O operations. How does Bardolf enable Osmond to carry out his O operations? That question looms larger than it could have before your work—for you, for Osmond, for the readers of this paper.

The Dependence Fact which ZR1-ZR3 signal threatens two broadly dualistic intuitions. In characterizing them I shall make explicit two of my pre-suppositions in this paper: that a person is a substance, and that a human body is a substance. At the very end of the paper we shall discover reason to question the presumption that a person's body is a substance.

First let "Sarah" in the parable remind you of the Soul. Given the notions of person and body, the simplest way to capture the notion that I need here is this.

Definition. The soul is the unique substance *S* that satisfies these three conditions.

- (i) *S* is the apparatus, or a significant part of it, that the person uses to carry out his or her mental and spiritual operations, or a significant portion of them.
- (ii) Neither *S* nor any part of *S* is the body or any part of the body.
- (iii) The person is either *S* or the compound of *S* and the body.

Of course there are many alternative conceptions of the soul that are useful in other contexts.

Think of Osmond's O operations as a human being's mental and spiritual operations, and think of Sarah as the soul and Bardolf as the body. F1, F2, C1, and C2 hold; and C3 and C4 now have immediate application. The soul plays no part in producing any of a person's mental operations. The only apparatus internal to the person that must do any work is apparatus internal to the body, particularly the brain and its peripheral organs. Therefore there is no reason to believe that the soul exists.

But the parable of Osmond has further application. Thinkers from Marcus Aurelius to Raymond Moody have thought that the body contains a "subtle body" or "astral body" or "spiritual body"—an unfamiliar bodily part that serves as a kind of double of the familiar ("gross") body, superimposed on it, perhaps even containing (subtle) duplicates of all the familiar (gross) bodily parts.¹⁷ So this time let "Sarah" remind you of the Subtle Body.

Definition. The subtle body is the unique substance *S* such that the body is the compound of *S* and the gross body.

The experimental information about the human body that makes F1 and F2

ring true is actually information about the gross body, for it consists of just those parts of the human body that have turned out to be easily accessible to scientists. So the subtle body and the soul are equally vulnerable to ZR3, and C3 and C4 apply to it too. The subtle body plays no part in producing any of a person's mental operations, and there is no reason to believe that it exists.

This attack upon the soul and the subtle body is no proof of incoherence, or even of inconsistency with any facts adduced. The inference within the parable from C1 and C2 to C3 is the crucial one, and it is not demonstrative. If you find the implications drawn below too repugnant, you might wish to seek grounds for blocking that inference. But the immediate upshots of the Dependence Fact are these.

C5. Neither soul nor subtle body exists.

C6. Every part of the gross human body is a part of the person, and every part of the person is a part of the gross body.

C7. The only apparatus a person possesses for carrying out his or her mental operations is the gross human body.

We have already been led to C5. C6 is the sensible conclusion to draw from C5; and C6 in turn entails both C5 and C7. Such a thorough attack upon dualist intuitions certainly complicates any attempt at an account of eternal life. How can we even contemplate the possibility that the person is capable of surviving death?

III. *The Reductionist Gambit*

At just this point John Hick's theory recommends itself.¹⁸ Hick regards a person, not as a ghost in a machine, but as an "empirical self" whose mental side is a matter of "behavior and behavioral dispositions."¹⁹

Hick tells three parables of his own. In the one that counts, Mr. X dies, and a "replica" of him appears in a world spatially distinct from our own, a "replica" that apparently possesses Mr. X's memories, and is "physically and psychologically indistinguishable" from him.²⁰ In spite of the utter lack of spatio-temporal continuity between Mr. X and his "replica," and in spite of their failure to contain any components in common, Hick argues that sufficient evidence could accumulate to justify the claim that the "replica" is no mere replica, but is identical with Mr. X: that is, he and Mr. X are one and the same man.

Nevertheless, Hick's theory is incompatible with the New Testament teaching that the "spiritual body"—the *soma pneumatikon*—is a transformation of the "natural body"—the *soma pseukikon*. Notice the function of the pronouns in these texts: "The seed you sow does not come to life unless it has first died." "What is sown in the earth as a perishable thing is raised imperishable. Sown in humiliation, it is raised in glory; sown in weakness, it is raised in power; sown as an animal body, it is raised as a spiritual body."²¹ According

to all these texts and more, the natural body is transformed into, not replaced by, the spiritual body.

Further evidence appears in the texts describing Jesus's resurrection. First Jesus's followers discover an astounding fact: his body—unlike Mr. X's—is not in the tomb. Then an angel tells them two more facts: he is not here; he is risen.²² The two claims that he is not here and that he is risen are meant to help *explain* the fact that his body is not here. The explanation succeeds only if it is understood that the body that is no longer here in the tomb has been transformed into the body he possesses now that he is risen.

You may find this evidence weaker. That depends on where you think Paul's analogy between Jesus's resurrection and that of other people finally breaks down. Hick, for one, has said in correspondence, "my own 'replica' theory concerned the general resurrection, not the resurrection of Jesus, which I take to have been different and unique in character."

But is Hick's theory philosophically tenable? We are forced to raise this question when we address a further discrepancy between Hick's theory and the New Testament. Mr. X and his "replica" are very much alike, but the spiritual body is supposed to be very different from the natural body. Well, then, why not simply allow Mr. X's "replica" to differ significantly from the original Mr. X? The answer is that Hick is philosophically constrained to build physical and psychological similarity into Mr. X's "replica":

The reason for postulating full initial bodily similarity between the resurrected person and the pre-resurrection person is to preserve a personal identity which we are supposing to be wholly bound up with the body. If the person is an indissoluble psycho-physical unity, it would seem that he must begin his resurrection life as identically the person who has just died, even though he may then proceed to undergo changes which are not possible in our present world.²³

Given the discontinuities between Mr. X and his "replica," only such thorough similarities could tip the balance in favor of the thesis that the "replica" just is Mr. X.

But this picture of a balance of the evidence begins to reveal the philosophical weakness of the theory. Hick holds that the question whether the "replica" is identical with Mr. X should be settled by "what we would say" about the identity of "replicas" in his similar preliminary parables, and by what Mr. X's "replica" himself "would say" about his own identity within the present parable.²⁴

But that sort of approach cannot settle the matter. There are two ways to see this. (a) According to Hick, we must base our judgment about the "replica" upon a certain sufficiency of evidence. But what is it evidence *for*? What fact constitutes the supposed identity of Mr. X and his "replica"? It cannot simply be the similarities and the apparent memories, for they constitute the evidence. If they are evidence for some identity-fact, that fact is another fact.

(b) We can come at the same point from a different direction. What is it in the idea of being the same human being that *makes* the similarities between Mr. X and his "replica" weightier evidence than the discontinuities between them? How are we to make the scales accurate? An account of survival that can answer this question is better off than one that cannot.

It emerges that there really is no fact that the "replica" is identical with Mr. X. In one of his preliminary parables Hick says that the question of identity "would presumably be a matter for decision."²⁵ In the case of Mr. X, "we should be obliged to modify our concept of 'same person'"; the modification is an improvement because the original and the "replica" "have everything in common that they could possibly have, given that they exist successively in different spaces."²⁶ But—to press point (b)—perhaps the idea of being the same human being does not allow for that "given" to be surmounted. To press point (a), if the only facts we can point to are facts about the similarities and the discontinuities between the original and the "replica," it *follows* that there is no further fact about whether the "replica" is or is not identical with Mr. X.

Hick's theory may be assimilated to the one Derek Parfit presents in *Reasons and Persons*.²⁷ Parfit defends a kind of *reductionism* about personal identity: he says that a person's identity over time just consists in certain more particular facts, facts about physical and psychological similarities and continuities; and that these facts do not presuppose the person's identity over time—or for that matter even the very existence of a person. The fact that persons exist, or the fact that persons persist over time, has for Parfit no metaphysical bite to it: we could give a complete description of reality without claiming that persons exist or persist.²⁸

Parfit argues convincingly that any theorist who answers questions of identity by a "decision" or a "stipulation" to extend the usual criteria does not differ in any interesting way from a reductionist. In correspondence, Hick seems to agree. If we want to know the truth about a person's persistence after we learn the facts about similarity and continuity, it doesn't matter whether we're told "There is no such truth" or "I hereby decide to call this the truth rather than that."²⁹

A reductionist theory which denies that there are any special facts about personal identity is not consistent with Paul's concern as he launches into the central passage: "For if the dead are not raised, it follows that Christ was not raised; and if Christ was not raised, your faith has nothing in it and you are still in your old state of sin. ...If it is for this life only that Christ has given us hope, we of all men are most to be pitied." "If the dead are never raised to life, 'let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.'"³⁰

One theological merit of Parfit's book is that it presents a clear and powerful alternative to the New Testament teaching about eternal life. Parfit's

own account is closer to Buddhist teaching, and it is natural for him to conclude his book with texts like these:

Buddha has spoken thus: 'O Brethren, actions do exist, and also their consequences, but the person that acts does not. There is no one to cast away this set of elements and no one to assume a new set of them. There exists no Individual, it is only a conventional name given to a set of elements.'

The mental and the material are really here,
But here there is no human being to be found.
For it is void and merely fashioned like a doll,
Just suffering piled up like grass and sticks.³¹

To make a *decision* about Mr. X's "replica" is to rely on Buddhist rather than Christian anthropology. The latter takes personal identity seriously. To be sure, there is religious value for non-Buddhists in some of the anti-egocentric corollaries of reductionism; some of them are also corollaries of the Christian doctrine of agape. But while a New Testament interpreter might turn *in extremis* to reductionism, at this stage the proposal to accept a *decision* about the "replica" is a counsel of defeat. Let us continue to suppose that there is a truth to be found, and try to find it.

But let us focus on Mr. X instead of his "replica." Imagine that Mr. X is a Corinthian who has written an urgent letter to Paul, but that Hick intercepts it and writes Mr. X an epistle of his own. Mr. X breaks the seal on Hick's epistle with trembling hands, and scans the page. At the moment of death, he reads, his body will be laid to rest, and an extremely similar "replica" will appear elsewhere—claiming to remember living Mr. X's life.

Mr. X's response is easy to imagine: "What does all that have to do with me? Nothing of *me* will be present in my 'replica'—no Platonic soul, no bit of bodily stuff—so none of *my* characteristics will be preserved in the 'replica's' bodily condition or psychological states or apparent memories." Novelists sometimes write about real people, giving the lie to their disclaimer "any resemblance between my characters and real people is purely coincidental"; and Mr. X now mordantly reflects that Hick's epistle has reversed the procedure: it deals with a person who does not now exist, and the resemblance between that person and Mr. X really is purely coincidental—or, worse, a monstrous cosmic joke. Mr. X vacillates between "selfless" benevolence toward his "replica" and defiant conviction that even his "replica" must eventually come to take those apparent memories a little more philosophically. After all, the point that strikes Mr. X now is one his "replica" can also come to appreciate.

The "replica," then, remains a mere replica. Hick's parable is a denial of survival, not a device to render it intelligible. We have only to ask Mr. X. His intuitions are absolutely sound, whether or not he can defend them philosophically.³²

IV. Criteria of Persistence for Human Beings

Under what conditions might Mr. X survive death? More generally, under what conditions does Mr. X persist from one moment to the next? We need better standards for answering these questions. The best I know of are the Aristotelian standards that David Wiggins has developed. I refer the reader to his extraordinary book *Sameness and Substance*³³ for a defense of them. Here I shall merely sketch them and appropriate what seems right for my own purposes.

A predicate F supplies a criterion of persistence, or identity over time, for a natural thing y just in case it adequately answers the Aristotelian question "What is y?" F must be a sortal predicate. F must also be a natural kind predicate: it may be clear enough through ostension and the like to be quite usable, but its sense can be expected to be nomologically laden and learnable gradually and scientifically rather than armchair analytically. Roughly, F will be the most narrow or specific sortal, natural kind predicate such that we cannot conceive y not to instantiate F. For, on the one hand, it must be *de re* necessary that y instantiate F, because we wish to exclude the possibility that y should cease to be, or should never have been, characterizable by F. On the other hand, F should be the most specific such predicate, because it will then be the most informative about the conditions under which y persists.³⁴

When y is you or I or Mr. X, the appropriate F is "human being," or "animal of the species *homo sapiens*." This predicate provides the necessary and sufficient conditions for the persistence of any y it is true of. For it specifies *the nature of the continuity* (Wiggins's phrase is "the manner of coincidence") that must be present between y and z in order for z to be the same human being as y.

A basic fact about the variety of continuity that must hold between y and z, if z is to be the same human being as y, is that "human being" entails "person" and that "person" in turn is heavily laden with the psychological. Wiggins suggests this definition of "person."

Perhaps x is a person if and only if x is an animal falling under the extension of a [natural] kind whose typical members perceive, feel, remember, imagine, desire, make projects, move themselves at will, speak, carry out projects, acquire a character as they age, are happy or miserable, are susceptible to concern for members of their own or like species...[note carefully these and subsequent dots—DW], conceive of themselves as perceiving, feeling, remembering, imagining, desiring, making projects, speaking..., have, and conceive of themselves as having, a past accessible to experience-memory and a future accessible in intention..., etc.³⁵

Wiggins regards "person" as a biological predicate—"animal that is..."—restricted by a non-biological functional or "systemic" component. But the thesis that all persons are animals runs afoul of New Testament references to the likes of angels, demons, and divine persons. I propose that we help

ourselves to the merits of the quoted passage by taking it as the schema of a definition of "person that is an animal," or "biological person."

The alteration is peripheral here, for in any case it is "human being" that provides our own persistence conditions, and on either reading the quoted passage makes explicit part of the sense of "human being" and thereby part of what it is for *y* and *z* to be continuous in the way that "human being" provides for. The specific natural kind predicate that determines the principle of identity over time for you and me is not "person" but "human-person"—or simply "human being." Our persistence conditions are specified, not by a criterion of personal identity, but by a criterion of human identity.

Wiggins places the salutary dots in his account to signal the fact that the concept *person* (and therefore the concept *human being*) is not yet fully clear to us.³⁶ A human person is necessarily an animal. It is therefore sensible to think that further discoveries about the concept *human* must wait upon biology.

But the New Testament suggests its own supplemental biology, its own enhancement of the familiar accounts of the nature of life. A human person is essentially an animal capable of gaining eternal life: an animal that is capable of becoming, or has already begun to become, a "spiritual person," inclined to exhibit agape toward God and neighbor. So we can fill in some of those dots, with a phrase like "are capable of gaining eternal life, including its agapic manifestations." The account begins to fuse the two aspects of eternal life noted initially into the seamless whole which the New Testament takes them to constitute.

V. Coming to Terms with Plato

In this section we develop a crucial necessary condition for the persistence of human beings, and in the end a set of conditions that are jointly sufficient. A human being is essentially a certain kind of animal with a certain range of capacities and dispositions. Now how does this characterization help specify the manner in which a human being *y* must be continuous with *z* in order for *y* to have persisted as *z*? Again, Wiggins:

A disposition is the sort of thing which can rest latent, be revived and re-freshed, and is at the disposal of its owner to use under all sorts of different circumstances or not to use. It is impossible to conceive of memory causality by analogy with action at a distance as a transaction over a matterless gap between the external world at one time and a mind at a later time. The more one tries to conceive of such a thing the less it can satisfy him.³⁷

Wiggins is surely right to think that the systemic component in a person's makeup must be grounded in the stuff composing the person. It is just at this point that we must break decisively with Hick, and make the accommodation with Plato that we have suspected all along would be needed in any account

of survival. It is a merit of the accommodation we shall urge that it flows from an attempt to answer the more general question of the variety of continuity that a human being must retain during any change in order to persist.

Plato held that one crucial part of the person by its very nature made possible the rationality essential to personhood. And he held that if the person is to persist then just that part of the person must also persist. Plato thought wrongly that the part in question was not a part of the body—perhaps it was the soul, perhaps the rational soul or the rational part of the soul. I think Plato was right on the central point. So I shall label it the *Platonic Principle*:³⁸

If a human being *y* persists over a period of time then so must that *part* of *y*—*whatever it turns out to be in the case of human beings*—that is nomologically required for there to be a human being—that is, a human animal with the attributes essential to personhood. And that entails that from one moment to the next in *y*'s career some of the same *stuff* must help constitute *y*.

I shall use the Latin term "*anima*" to refer to that part.

Definition. The *anima* is the part, or improper part, or collection of parts, of the human being whose existence is nomologically necessary for the existence of the human being.

The Platonic Principle entails that if the laws of nature dictate that human beings must possess a certain part, then a necessary condition for the persistence of a human being over a stretch of time is the persistence of that very part, and therefore the presence from one moment to the next of some of the same constituent matter or stuff.

Two kinds of knowledge are called for if we wish to apply the Platonic Principle to find definite necessary conditions for the persistence of human beings: first, which properties in humans are essential to personhood; secondly, which parts of humans are, by natural necessity, required for a human to possess those properties. The line of thought leading from Hick through Wiggins has helped answer the first question. And a natural line of thought leading from the Dependence Fact requires that any answer to the second question mention only parts of the (gross) body. It is only an account of human personhood with this sort of detailed structure that can ground Hick's project of balancing similarities against discontinuities, and hedge it against resolution by fiat.

The theory of the *anima* flows not only from reflection on the persistence conditions of human beings, but also from the attempt to interpret the New Testament. In particular, it provides a natural way to read I Corinthians 15:36-45 and II Corinthians 5:1-5 as teaching a single coherent doctrine.

The first of these passages likens the bodies of the dead who are to be raised to plants whose grains fall into the ground. In one sense, described in verses 42-44, "what is sown in the earth" is "an animal body," which "is raised as a

spiritual body." In another sense, however, described in verses 36-38, "the seed you sow" is the anima, the essential nucleus of the animal body. It will be in turn a part of the body in which the dead are raised; on that account "what you sow is not the body that shall be;...God clothes it with the body of his choice."

According to the second passage, "we yearn to have our heavenly habitation put on over" "the earthly frame that houses us today," "in the hope that, being thus clothed, we should not find ourselves naked." What we hope to save from nakedness is again the anima—in the form of which we should survive if no non-essential parts were granted us. Since this is the part that is essential to our persistence, its own persistence enables us first to be housed by one frame and then clothed by another habitation.

In both passages, the anima is that part of the body whose "naked" state is forestalled by the divine act of "clothing." The resulting "spiritual body" or "heavenly habitation" possesses both new components and new properties. The body is raised imperishable, in glory, in power; our mortal part is absorbed into life immortal.

How serious is this accommodation with Platonism? It entails two characteristic Platonic doctrines.

P1. The anima can, in principle, persist when nothing else of the person remains, and preserve the person thereby.³⁹

P2. The anima is the seat of psychological continuity within the person; it earns the title of anima by housing the dispositions essential to personhood.

But the Platonic Principle does not entail certain other Platonic doctrines. We may still accept the following reasonable monistic doctrines.

M1. The anima is not the unique locus of spiritual growth or maturity. Dante shows in the *Inferno* that the inner person is subject to failings far more serious than those, like lust or gluttony, that are embodied in more peripheral, metaphysically inessential parts of the body. We have already noticed that eternal life suffuses the whole body—the peripheral as well as the nuclear. Even Augustine allows that "as when the spirit serves the flesh, it is fitly called carnal, so, when the flesh serves the spirit, it will justly be called spiritual."⁴⁰

M2. The person is more than the anima, and the anima is only a part of the person. And the rest of the body is not the person's clothing, instrument, baggage; according to C6, every part of the body is a part of the person. Let me make that point in paradoxical style: even if there comes a moment when nothing is left of the person but the naked anima, the person remains non-identical with it. That follows by Leibniz's Law from the fact that the person but not the anima once had a left ear as a part.

M3. The anima is a part of the body. So even the amended Platonism wherein the person is the compound of anima and body is false, just as it is false that a person is a compound of brain and body.

Three conditions are necessary and jointly sufficient for a human being to survive death through eternal life. We could have learned them, respectively, from Wiggins, Hick, and Plato.

S1. A human being is essentially an animal with a body; therefore an animal with a body must persist. (That is no obstacle to resurrection or glorification. Biology's present account of the sense of "animal" is far from complete, and biology may be revealed as well as natural.)

S2. A human being essentially has the attributes of personhood, including the possibilities of agape; therefore a being with those attributes must persist. (Survival by eternal life requires the realization of some of those possibilities.)

If conditions S1 and S2 are satisfied by the same being, then some human being exists, but that is not yet to say that the same human being persists.

S3. That part of the person must persist that grounds those essential attributes, and it must continue to do the grounding. When the anima meets this condition, it guarantees that the *same* animal, and the *same* subject of personal attributes, has survived; in other words, it guarantees that the same person has survived. (Perhaps everyone but Augustine⁴¹ agrees that some of a human's parts are always survival-inessential; nail clipping and even severe amputation are losses we can survive, even at the moment of death. But there are some parts that we cannot live without. The brain is a sensible place to start looking, though even at this stage even of secular science it is clear that this guess is much too rough.)

VI. *Familiar Problems, Unfamiliar Resources*

It is condition S3 that finally arouses old doubts about the doctrine of eternal life. For the Dependence Fact suggests that I possess only gross bodily parts. And "certain facts about the present age"⁴² seem to entail that at death all my familiar bodily parts cease to exist or to support my essential attributes: apparently all of those parts begin to disintegrate, and apparently none of them is lifted bodily for use elsewhere. Then how could S3 possibly be satisfied?

According to a familiar story, at some time after death God miraculously reintegrates some or all of my bodily parts, so that they come to ground my personal attributes as they once did. But the old objections become more serious if, lacking a soul or the like, I have no other parts but these. The first problem is that long before reintegration I evidently lose the dispositions essential to personhood, and thus existence itself. Some New Testament passages suggest something like sleep during this period, while others suggest a more robust consciousness.⁴³ But doctrinal tinkering is no help here, since any analogue of sleep still requires the preservation of the dispositions essential to personhood.

The second problem is that it seems that the result of this sort of miracle would not be my own restoration to new life, but the creation of a new person

from the remains of my old parts. Peter van Inwagen argues persuasively that "if a man should be totally destroyed, then it is very hard to see how any man who comes into existence thereafter could be the *same* man," for a man persists only if his components occupy their positions relative to one another as a result of that man's biological processes, and that is not the case here.⁴⁴

The two problems are not distinct. The role of the second problem is just to accent the seriousness of the first problem. Enhanced clarity about my persistence conditions has served only to reveal more starkly that the disintegration of the only parts I have is the ultimate threat to my continued existence.

I shall conclude by calling attention to two kinds of resources for meeting these serious problems. I mention them not in order to argue that they solve the problems, but in order to point out the particular area where further work must be done. Nevertheless, it counts a great deal that they look promising and not desperate.

The resources I am about to sketch differ over the relation they intimate between the human corpse and the resurrection body: to use a culinary figure, the first regards the corpse as fixings; the second, as leftovers. According to the first, disintegration may not be all that threatening; according to the second, what looks to you and me like disintegration may not be.

The first resource is the Church Fathers, and Origen in particular. The Fathers are promising because their access to the New Testament is relatively uncluttered, and because they are sometimes aware of the dangers in uncritical assimilation of Athens (including Plato) to Jerusalem.⁴⁵ They all accept liberal doses of soul-body dualism, but Origen holds that only God can exist incorporeally,⁴⁶ thereby advancing a surprising distance toward C3, though not C4-C7. He sees the need to tackle problems of the kind I have just sketched, for he accepts those "facts about the present age": at death the body begins to be dissolved, reduced to dust and ashes.⁴⁷ How then can he speak of survival, when on his own account that would require bodily persistence?

Origen maintains that after death, during the process of bodily dissolution, the person retains a certain *ratio*⁴⁸ or *logos spermatos*:⁴⁹ that is, a "power" or "germ" or "reason" or "principle" (as various translators have it) which, by the Word of God, will enable the restoration of the body's parts, and endow the body with incorruption and immortality. The *ratio* is not to be conceived as a substance; it is neither soul nor subtle body nor anima. Instead, it is a *power* which the person possesses post-mortem. Here Origen explicitly draws upon the pregnant Pauline figure of the grain that falls into the ground, dies, and then brings forth a new plant. He writes that the *ratio* raises up our bodies "as the power which is in the grain of wheat, after its corruption and death, repairs and restores the grain into a body having stalk and ear."⁵⁰

This theoretical notion, and the analogy of the grain which led Origen to it, may contain valuable resources for confronting the old problems. Perhaps

the *ratio* is a power a person gains pre-mortem along with eternal life, and retains even as his or her parts disintegrate. While disintegration is not to be taken lightly, the conceptually crucial matter is not contiguity of bodily parts, but retention of the dispositions essential to personhood. If Origen is right, dissolution does not entail destruction. Perhaps the scattered conglomerate can retain, with supernatural aid in the form of the *ratio*, the dispositions essential to personhood.

It would certainly help to have some idea *how* someone could persist in the face of disintegration. There are natural analogues that get us started: the watch that persists, and retains its essential powers, even though scattered into tiny bits in the jeweler's repair shop. With a divinely bestowed *ratio*, it might still tick away, and keep ghostly but accurate time! Then the Old Testament vision of the nation of Israel provides a further lure to philosophical imagination: Israel remains God's chosen people even when the Diaspora is scattered to the four winds.

The hand of Yahweh was on me; he carried me away by the spirit of Yahweh and set me down in the middle of the valley, a valley full of bones. He made me walk up and down and all around among them. There were vast quantities of these bones on the floor of the valley; and they were completely dry. He said to me, 'Son of man, can these bones live?' I said, 'You know, Lord Yahweh.' He said, 'Prophesy over these bones. Say, "Dry bones, hear the word of Yahweh. The Lord Yahweh says this to these bones: I am now going to make breath enter you, and you will live. I shall put sinews on you, I shall make flesh grow on you, I shall cover you with skin and give you breath, and you will live; and you will know that I am Yahweh."' I prophesied as I had been ordered. While I was prophesying, there was a noise, a clattering sound; it was the bones coming together. And as I looked, they were covered with sinews; flesh was growing on them and skin was covering them, yet there was no breath in them. He said to me, 'Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man. Say to the breath, "The Lord Yahweh says this: Come from the four winds, breath, breathe on these dead, so that they come to life!"' I prophesied as he had ordered me, and the breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet, a great, an immense army.⁵¹

The notion of the *ratio* is another step in the direction of Platonism. It may fall afoul of the Dependence Fact. It may conflict with the commonsense view that our psychological features supervene upon the condition of the stuff we are made of.⁵² Such questions need to be considered. But I shall not pursue them here. I shall only call attention to the particular way in which this theoretical proposal compels us to reconsider the nature of the body.

The second resource is a type of revisionary metaphysics. The type needed is seen most easily by examining this reformulation of one of the paper's central arguments.

Premise 1. If the gross body is a substance and the Dependence Fact holds then all my parts are parts of the gross body.

Premise 2. The Dependence Fact holds.

Premise 3. The gross body is a substance.

Conclusion. All my parts are parts of the gross body.

The argument is valid, the first two premises are reasonable, and the problems might be easier to solve if we could deny the conclusion. So perhaps a metaphysics that denies Premise 3 is worth considering. I have suggested that the inference from C1 and C2 and C3 is the weakest link in my parable's argument. Its greatest weakness may lie in the possibility that the familiar gross body is not a substance.

Consider seventeenth-century revisionary metaphysics. Many philosophers found the sticking point in Descartes's philosophy to be his doctrine of two miraculously correlated substances. Spinoza found the natural remedy in a denial that the body is a substance in its own right. Instead it was a "mode" of some further substance. Cartesians like Spinoza found it more intelligible that two series of occurrences within two modes of a single substance should be correlated than that two series of occurrences within two substances should be correlated. They viewed the Dependence Fact as naturally more hospitable to double-aspect theories than to double-substance theories of the human animal. Does their viewpoint finally provide a way to understand C1?

Or consider Indian metaphysics, according to which the human body is an instance of *maya*—the appearance that the underlying reality presents to us, partly revelatory, partly illusory. This conception makes room for the position that when as it seems to us the body disintegrates, the reality of which it is the appearance persists.

But perhaps the categories of substance and mode will be most useful. So drop the presumption that the human body is a substance, and suppose that the gross body is a mode of the human being. And suppose that the human being possesses at least one mode distinct from it, so subtle as to be scientifically inaccessible. Drop the language of body entirely, and speak of gross and subtle modes of the person. Suppose that a human being's mental operations are manifested in parallel changes within these two modes.

The anima remains by definition the survival-essential part of the human being. It too has gross and subtle modifications. Suppose that the anima persists if and only if its owner's subtle mode functions properly. Suppose finally that the subtle mode may remain a characteristic of a human being even if the gross mode ceases to do so.

On such a theory, survival of what we used to call the dissolution of the body becomes conceivable, for this is not the destruction of a substance but only the cessation of a mode of functioning not essential to the anima or the human being. Such theories are revisionary in a wholesale manner, and they may well entail revisions we should be unwilling to make. Again I shall not pursue these questions here.

Revisionary proposals like those involving the concepts of *ratio* or mode require closer examination of the nature of the human body. Apart from such proposals, hopes for survival are intimately bound up with the destiny of the familiar human body. For then beyond the body there is nothing of the person.

But then what does the New Testament, together with its Old Testament roots, teach about the human body? What understanding can philosophy offer of its nature? The varied strands of this inquiry into eternal life all converge upon questions about the nature of the human body.⁵³

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NOTES

1. Jn. 3:36; 4:14; 5:24; 6:54; Mt. 12:28. All references to New Testament passages are to The New English Bible (Oxford and Cambridge: Oxford University Press and Cambridge University Press, 1970).

2. Rom. 6:1-11, 8:5-13; II Cor. 3:18, 4:10-12, 16-18; Eph. 2:1-6; Col. 3:1-3.

3. Lk. 10:25-37; Jn. 13:34-35; 15:12-17; Rom. 13:9; Gal. 5:14; I Pet. 1:22, 23; I Jn. 3:10-24; 4:7-12.

4. Acts 24:15; Mt. 25:46. Cf. Lk. 14:14; 20:35-36; Jn. 5:29; Rev. 20:11-15.

5. Mt. 22:32; Jn. 5:24-25; 6:54.

6. Rom. 8:16-39; II Cor. 4:16-18; 5:16-17; Eph. 2:4-7; Phil. 1:6; 3:10-11.

7. I Cor. 15:35.

8. "Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead," the 1955 Ingersoll Lecture, reprinted in Krister Stendahl, ed., *Immortality and Resurrection* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1965).

9. Gal. 5:17; cf. Rom. 8:1-11.

10. I Cor. 15:26; Philip. 3:21; II Tim. 1:10; Rev. 20:14; 21:4.

11. Rom. 8:23 and 8:11.

12. Mt. 28; Lk. 24:3-43; Jn. 20:14-21:14; Acts 1:3-5; 5:30-32; I Cor. 15:3-8; Philip. 3:21.

13. I Cor. 6:14; 15:3-28, 35-54; Philip. 3:21; I Jn. 3:2. II Cor. 5:1-10 can be read as suggesting the contrary, but it need not: if the anima (to use the terminology I introduce below) is what is "clothed," the result is again a transformation rather than a replacement. See the discussion in Section 5 of I Corinthians 15:36-45 and II Corinthians 5:1-5.

14. Cullman, *op. cit.*, p. 26. See William Temple, *Nature, Man and God* (New York: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1960), pp. 461-62.

15. See Temple, *op. cit.*, pp. 462-64. At p. 463 Temple observes that Plato, at Timaeus 41a-b, speaks of immortality as a bounty that God bestows on souls which do not have it by nature.

16. Origen *De Principiis* Preface. 8, in Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds.,

The Ante-Nicene Fathers IV (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), p. 241. Subsequent page references to Origen's works are to this edition.

17. See Marcus Aurelius *Meditations* 4.21, and Raymond A. Moody, Jr., *Life After Life* (Covington, GA: Bantam Books, 1975).

18. John H. Hick, *Death and Eternal Life* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1976), chapter 15. Hereafter referred to as DEL. Hick presented his parables earlier in "Theology and Verification," *Theology Today* XVII (April 1960), partially reprinted in Antony Flew, ed., *Body, Mind, and Death* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964); in *Faith and Knowledge* (London: Macmillan, 1967), pp. 180-85; and in *Philosophy of Religion* (second edition: Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973), pp. 99-101. He replied to objections in "Resurrection Worlds and Bodies," *Mind* (July 1973); and in "Mr. Clarke's Resurrection Also," *Sophia* (October 1972).

19. DEL, p. 278.

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 287 and 285. And see the passage cited at note 23 below.

21. I Cor. 15:36, 42-44. See verse 53; Rom. 8:11 and 8:23; Philip. 3:21.

22. Mt. 28:6; Mk. 16:6; Lk. 24:6.

23. DEL, pp. 294-95.

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 280-85.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 280. For more on decisions about how to extend normal usage, see pp. 281-85, 287-88.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 287.

27. Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1984). See Part Three in particular.

28. *Ibid.*, pp. 210, 212. There is serious reason to challenge the coherence of the view encapsulated in this paragraph. If the fact that A consists in the fact that B, how can B fail to presuppose A? But pursuit of this question would take us too far afield.

29. *Ibid.*, pp. 240-41.

30. I Cor. 15:16, 17, 19, 32. For a small sample of a very large number of passages showing that Paul cares whether the same person persists after death, see Rom. 8:15-39; I Cor. 6:14; 15:49.

31. Parfit, *op. cit.*, pp. 502-3.

32. A rich literature has grown up around a defense based on the possibility that two "replicas" might spring into existence just as easily as one. See DEL, note 14 on pp. 295-96, for the first few contributions to that literature. Hick (pp. 290-95) and others have responses, some of them raising the embarrassing but formally similar possibility of amoeba-style fission, a similar "threat" to the uncontroversial criterion of spatio-temporal continuity. Mr. X's intuitions, supplemented by the positive theory to be presented below, are logically sufficient and dialectically simpler than reliance on such a defense.

33. David Wiggins, *Sameness and Substance* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980).

34. See *ibid.*, esp. sections 2.1, 2.5, 3.1, and 4.5-4.9.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 171. See section 6.7.

36. See *ibid.*, section 6.8.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 220.

38. See Richard Swinburne's illuminating development of his closely related "wider Aristotelian account" of personal identity, in sections 1 and 2 of his contribution to Sydney Shoemaker and Swinburne, *Personal Identity* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984). Perhaps the better label would be "the classical Greek view."

39. Perhaps II Cor. 5:1-4 contemplates this possibility.

40. *City of God* XIII.20, in Philip Schaff, ed., *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* II (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956), p. 255.

41. *Ibid.* XXII.12-21, pp. 459-73.

42. I borrow the phrase from Peter van Inwagen's impressive article "The Possibility of Resurrection," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* IX (1978), p. 116.

43. For sleep, see I Cor. 7:39; 11:30; 15:6, 18, 20, 51; I Thes. 4:13-15. M. J. Harris believes that the verbs in I Cor. 11:30 and I Thes. 4:13 may stand for a repeated occurrence, and that those in the other verses probably have a "punctiliar sense," in which case none of these passages would support the doctrine that anyone stays asleep after death. See his *Raised Immortal: Resurrection and Immortality in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), p. 260, n. 35. The book is a fair-minded and thorough reference work. For robust consciousness, see Lk. 16:19-31; 20:38; 23:43; II Cor. 5:8; Philip. 1:23.

44. Van Inwagen, *op. cit.*, pp. 116-20.

45. Besides Origen, these Fathers are worth considering: Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tatian, Tertullian, Methodius, Jerome, Cyril of Jerusalem, Gregory of Nyssa, and Augustine. For a splendid introduction see Harry Wolfson, "Immortality and Resurrection in the Philosophy of the Church Fathers," in Stendahl, ed., *op. cit.*

46. *De Principiis* I.6.4, p. 262; II.2.2, p. 270; *Contra Celsus* VII.32, p. 623 (henceforth DP and CC, respectively).

47. DP III.6.5, p. 346; CC V.19, p. 519; CC VII.32, p. 623.

48. DP II.10.3, pp. 294-95.

49. CC VII.32, p. 623; cf. V.23, p. 553.

50. DP II.10.3, p. 294.

51. Ezek. 37:1-10. The New Jerusalem Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1985).

52. See Wiggins, *op. cit.*, pp. 182-83, and all of chapter 7; and cf. Socrates's argument at *Phaedo* 92e-93a.

53. A version of this paper was read at a conference of the American Academy of Religion in Santa Clara, CA, in April 1986; another version was read at an NEH-sponsored Institute in Philosophy of Religion at Bellingham, WA, in August 1986. For their manifold insights and helpfulness I am grateful to the editor of this journal, to an anonymous referee, and to Donald Viney, Linda Zagzebski, Anthony Kenny, Marilyn McCord Adams, James F. Brown, Darrell Amundsen, William Alston, Phillip Montague, Bruce Russell, Richard Swinburne, John Hick, Merold Westphal, and David Paulsen.