

Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers

Volume 27 | Issue 1

Article 10

1-1-2010

Peter van Inwagen and Dean Zimmerman, eds., PERSONS: HUMAN AND DIVINE

C.G. Weaver

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

Recommended Citation

Weaver, C.G. (2010) "Peter van Inwagen and Dean Zimmerman, eds., PERSONS: HUMAN AND DIVINE," *Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers*: Vol. 27 : Iss. 1 , Article 10.

DOI: 10.5840/faithphil201027110

Available at: <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/faithandphilosophy/vol27/iss1/10>

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

the contingent imperatives of human flourishing as opposed to the intrinsic nature of actions. This comes even clearer into view when one brings divine commands into play, as the command of God immediately implies that actions are, in fact, *not* intrinsically good—a point which generates the Euthyphro dilemma in the first place. From an overtly Christian perspective, such as Evans's Kierkegaardian one, the motivation to understand moral obligations in fundamentally deontological terms is lost. As Evans has developed Kierkegaard's position, God gives us commands (which really amount to just one) so that we *love* God, as opposed to merely *obey*, and thereby fulfill our telos as individuals created by God. This is precisely how Evans sidesteps traditional objections to divine command theory, but this is essentially a version of Aquinas' answer as well. Subsequently, I doubt whether Evans will change the mind of anyone who comes to the book staunchly committed to a virtue approach to moral norms, but they may find new and creative ways to articulate and defend their position.

Conclusion

In both books Evans is a careful and appreciative, but at times critical, interpreter of Kierkegaard, who capably brings Kierkegaard's thought to bear on contemporary issues in philosophy. Evans remains conscious that he is offering us a particular reading of Kierkegaard and that no reading of Kierkegaard—including his—is incontestable. The result is a Kierkegaard whose views cannot be ignored by analytic philosophers interested in contemporary questions in philosophy of religion, ethics and meta-ethics.

Persons: Human and Divine, edited by Peter van Inwagen and Dean Zimmerman. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007. Pp. viii + 380 pages, \$99.00 hardback, \$35.00 paperback.

C. G. WEAVER, Chicago State University, Northern Illinois University

All essays within this anthology appear for the very first time, save section one of Alvin Plantinga's "Materialism and Christian Belief." Dean Zimmerman's introduction provides a succinct and insightful discussion of theology and its relationship to analytic philosophy (particularly analytic metaphysics). He explains how analytic philosophy is no longer the enemy of theology, and then just before summarizing each chapter, remarks that the spirit of the volume is very much in line with analytic philosophy that is the friend of theology.

Idealism

The more substantive portion of the volume starts with a rather interesting section on Idealism. In "Idealism Vindicated," Robert Adams explains that one of the main reasons why Idealism is currently rejected by many

philosophers is because of its inability to defend an idea of soulless substances. Adams tries to provide just such a defense. First, he admits that he is a mentalist, musing that everything that is real "is sufficiently spiritual in character to be aptly conceived on the model of our own minds, as experienced from the inside" (p. 35). But Adams also thinks that *primary qualities* of objects are *qualities of consciousness*. The mind has properties like having certain sensory images, and/or sensory states. From secondary qualities that present themselves in the sensory images, the mind derives certain primary qualities that are beyond a mere formal or structural character. And from these secondary qualities, the mind derives primary qualities, i.e., qualities of consciousness. By this, Adams does not mean to say that the things in themselves which are the objects of sensory evaluation by thinking substances have these qualities of consciousness *unabhängig*. What makes a thing, *das ding an sich*, is possessing qualities of consciousness that are in some way dependent upon the thinking substance (hence "mentalism").

In "The Self and Time," Robinson argues that persons are not essentially temporally located. Robinson makes a series of distinctions. First, a manifest image, he says, possesses certain sensible qualities different from the ones possessed by the scientific image. Second, the manifest image time (MIT) is said to possess both A and B-series features. Third, the scientific image time (SIT) is the time of the four-dimensional space-time and of individuals as Minkowskian space-time worms. Robinson assumes from the outset that the human person is immaterial and simple. He also assumes that the essence of the self is consciousness. An implication of these assumptions is that the self is never unconscious. But surely there are times at which the self is not conscious, thus by way of *reductio*, Robinson believes we are forced into answering the question, "how could a conscious subject endure through time at periods when she is not conscious?" by saying that with respect to MIT, *the knowing conscious subject does not endure through time*. As a result of this thesis, Robinson admits that the manifest image is a construct from experiences of individual knowing subjects. Thus, the time of the manifest image is not primitive but is in some way *dependent upon the knowing subject*. One wonders whether or not Robinson leaves himself open to fairly standard criticisms of b-theoretic views of temporal becoming here. For if such views of the phenomenology of temporal becoming are true, then such becoming would be dependent upon the knowing subject (*per* Robinson's position). But as William Lane Craig and others have argued, it seems that even the illusion of temporal becoming involves the experience of one moment lapsing and another subsequently arising. Thus, the phenomenology of illusory temporal becoming presupposes temporal becoming. How then is such becoming dependent upon knowing subjects?

Dualism

In his short paper on "Cartesian dualism," John Hawthorne examines several structural features of Descartes's metaphysic, and tries to show that

serious intellectual engagement with Cartesian philosophy of mind is metaphysically fruitful. He derives from Descartes's writings five axioms about the nature of principal attributes, and then points out that some typical issues related to Cartesian dualism are well-explained by a consideration of these five axioms, and that, given the possibility of the existence of a thing that is strictly mental, it seems at least more plausible to suppose that thinking things have parts that are non-extended. The essay is essentially exploratory in nature, and so there isn't necessarily much to criticize. Given multifarious Metametaphysics, and modal epistemologies, I wager that some philosophers will disapprove of any kind of Cartesian dualism no matter how it is dressed up, since such philosophers would affirm a sort of modal skepticism re the relevant possibility claim about the coherence of non-extended substances.

According to materialism, human persons are material objects, and nothing more. Plantinga's "Materialism and Christian Belief" proffers numerous arguments against this materialist thesis, and also addresses arguments for its truth. Plantinga's main argument against materialism is his replacement argument. Through the contemplation of a particular imaginary episode, one is invited to see that it is possible that one could cease to be for an extremely short amount of time. The idea is that one can survive the sequential replacement of various parts of one's body. This imaginary/metaphysically possible episode is supposed to show that possibly one can exist without one's body, since it appears human persons can have the modal property "able to exist when my body does not." Given some plausible logical and metaphysical theses about the nature of identity, it follows that we human persons are not identical to our bodies. Plantinga's second argument is an argument from metaphysical impossibility. He argues that material things are not the types of things which can think, and he particularly focuses on the inability of a material thing to have beliefs with respective content. According to materialism, beliefs are no more than neuronal events or structures of some sort (p. 108). Content is taken by Plantinga to be a property of beliefs. Given that beliefs are neuronal events of some sort, how is it that these neurophysiological aspects of our brains could come to have content? At the end of the chapter, Plantinga turns his guns towards the many objections to substance dualism. I find Plantinga's general dialectical strategy to be somewhat troublesome. For me, the question of whether or not human persons are essentially non-extended substances hinges upon whether or not there are arguments contrary to materialism which show that there is an explanatoral gap re the hard problem of consciousness (or for Plantinga re belief and content) that is itself essentially ontological in nature. Plantinga's strategy seems to be one which does no more than to motivate skepticism about the contemporary naturalistic hypotheses with respect to belief and content. However, providing even demolishing defeaters for such positions doesn't show that the relevant gap is ontological. Why can there be no naturalistic account of belief and content re human cognition? Why should we be a

priori non-materialists and/or physicalists? I do not think that a posteriori considerations introduce the least bit of doubt about the fact that the gap here could be merely epistemic.

Richard Swinburne's "From Mental/Physical Identity to Substance Dualism," walks the reader through a very intricate and new argument for substance dualism. He supposes that one can think of events as things to which the history of our cosmos can be reduced. Swinburne adopts what appears to be Jaegwon Kim's position with respect to events, that is to say, Swinburne thinks of events in terms of property exemplifications (triples featuring substances exemplifying properties at temporal indices). If one were to know the "names" of these substances that are involved in the respective events, one could deduce the history of the world. Something is said to belong properly to the category of the mental if it is the case that a subject has privileged access (p. 143). Swinburne then distinguishes between the mental and the pure mental, where the latter is understood to be that which contains no physical components whatsoever. For Swinburne then, there are pure mental properties, events, and substances (p. 160), which do not supervene upon physical substances. For Swinburne, one prime example of such pure mental substances is the human person. Swinburne tries to justify this conclusion by means of the introduction and defense of not a few metaphysical categories.

In "Ghosts are Chilly," W. D. Hart and Takashi Yagisawa attempt to describe just how causal interaction between the mind and physical body are possible, given substance dualism. They suppose that causation seems to involve the flow of energy (*a la* Phil Dowe). Both Hart and Yagisawa explain just how it is that such a flow of energy between mind and body is possible.

Hong Yu Wong's "Cartesian Psychophysics" proffers serious objections to John Foster's solution to the "pairing problem" in philosophy of mind. Foster's solution involves positing a type of natural nomicity which governs some mind-body relations. Wong's argument is essentially one from cost. Dualists need to realize the implications of affirming interactionist psychophysics. Wong believes that Foster's appeal to natural laws does not do justice to the general nature of causation. If we really believe in individualist natural laws which governs "interactions" of the sort with which Foster is concerned, then Wong believes we have to believe some rather strange things about the nature of human bodies. The question, "how does the soul feel its body?" is still unanswered from Wong's perspective.

Materialism

In "A Materialist Ontology of the Human Person," Peter van Inwagen begins his essay by making a series of insightful points about crucial metaphysical distinctions. Subsequent to this, he makes use of the metaphysical framework proffered for the purposes of addressing the mind-body problem. He attempts to show how, given his framework, certain types of dualism (as well as a particular identity theory about the mind-body

problem) are false. First, he addresses Thomistic dualism, charging Aquinas with the belief that the soul is the form of the body, and subsequently asking just why it could not be the case that the union of the body and the form of the body are not simply the body *simpliciter*. Next, he examines token-token identity theories, and property dualism, musing that property dualism cannot make sense of what it means to say that a property is a mental property and therefore nonphysical. Van Inwagen asks the token-token identity theorist, what exactly it is that is thought to be identical, and then admits that the answer to that question involves a commitment to "events." If there are no events, as van Inwagen seems to maintain, then there really is no token-token identity theory.

Hud Hudson's essay entitled, "I am not an animal!" completes the section on materialism. He, like van Inwagen, is committed to type of materialism though Hudson is most concerned with defending the thesis that materialism does not entail that human persons are animals. Hudson tries to establish this thesis wholly apart from giving attention to the debate about bodily criterion for personal identity. Hudson's defense is a "big-picture/best candidate" approach to the defense of his thesis. Hudson explicates and defends many assumptions for his best candidate justification, and then affirms that, given those metaphysical assumptions, the best candidate for human personhood does not meet the persistence conditions of human animals. Another side of the general point of the paper is an argument from cost. Hudson thinks that if you affirm that human persons are human animals, you must believe in three-dimensionalism, affirm a restricted theory of decomposition, take constitution to be identity, and deny the doctrine of general resurrection. This cost is too high for Hudson.

Embodiment and the Value of Persons

Conversant with the work of Nicholas Wolterstorff and Robert Adams, the late Phillip L. Quinn in "On the Intrinsic Value of Human Persons," argues that one can come to see just what is morally significant or valuable about human persons by pointing to horrifically clear instances of the violation of such personhood. Quinn then argues that some such violations necessarily involve the body of the violated person. The important implication per Quinn's view is that the value of a human person involves that respective person's embodiment.

Lynne Rudder Baker, in "Persons and the Natural Order," argues that the value and dignity of human persons does not lie in the fact that such persons have immaterial souls. Neither does such value lie in the fact that these persons enjoy libertarian freedom. Rather, it is in the property of "inwardness" that such value can be located. This inwardness is the ability to relate to things, via a first-person perspective. Baker leans heavily upon a constitutional view of human beings, which stipulates that human persons are wholly constituted by human bodies and are consequently (on Baker's view) human animals. With both the constitutional view of

human persons and the property of inwardness in-hand, Baker suggests that her account is thoroughly consistent with Christian theism.

Personhood in Christian Doctrine

In "The Word Made Flesh: Dualism, Physicalism, and the Incarnation," Trenton Merricks is concerned with how Christians should think about the incarnation amidst the numerous views of the mind-body problem. Merricks is clear about one major precondition for thinking hard about this subject - we ought to look at Christ in such a way that He is related to his human body in the same way each of us are related to ours. Merricks believes that becoming embodied is necessary for becoming human (as was the case for the incarnation of Christ). This fits better with a materialistic view of the human person. Merricks also thinks that an identity theory about the mental and the physical accounts well for God the Son having the body of Jesus and of no other human being. Thus, reflection upon the incarnation should give Christians good reasons to become materialists re the mind-body problem.

Peter Forrest's exotic essay, "The Tree of Life: Agency and Immortality in a Metaphysics Inspired by Quantum Theory," reflects upon particular interpretations of quantum theory which imply that at the point of the death of a person, the universe "splits" into two copies. In one copy the person survives, and in the other copy there is a corpse. This interpretation also suggests that the person in question survives her death more than once (over-survival). Forrest explicates how the "worlds" of the Many Worlds interpretation of quantum theory are "fibrous-universes" (pp. 316–317). He then attempts to show how this metaphysic accounts for free agency, immortality, and the Christian doctrine of a general resurrection.

In Michael Rea's essay "The Metaphysics of Original Sin," the idea that a person is morally responsible for her actions only if the principle of alternate possibilities holds with respect to her actions, is labeled (MR). After a very meaty explication of numerous theories of original sin, Rea concerns himself principally with whether or not these multifarious theories are consistent with (MR). Rea argues that all theories of original sin which allow for true counterfactuals of freedom, and which also suggest that free agents have counterfactual power over the past, are consistent with (MR). Likewise with respect to any theory of original sin which allows for non-endurantist views of persistence over time. Historically speaking, Rea sees two plausible interpretations of Jonathan Edwards' understanding of original sin that are consistent with (MR): (a) the Organic Whole Theory, and (b) the Fission Theory. This would appear to be bad news for Edwards, since he believed that (MR) was inconsistent with original sin, and in fact, used this to show that compatibilism is true.

Brian Leftow's "Modes without Modalism" is a very concentrated chapter on Latin Trinitarianism and John Locke. The difficulty with Latin approaches has been modalism. Leftow thinks he has a way out, *viz.*, John Locke's view of personhood and mode. Persons, according to Locke, are

things that exist by the occurrence of modes, and Leftow applies this to the Persons of the Trinity, which are understood to be event-based in such a way that they are founded upon a substance (p. 374). Leftow thinks that the Trinity “arises” because God lives His life in three streams of events at once. Each stream is the life of a person, and each person exists as the occurrence of a Lockean mode. In order to make this claim plausible, Leftow appeals to temporary identity theories, and so is committed to a contingent identity thesis.

Overall, *Persons: Human and Divine* is a great anthology. The editors did a terrific job of drawing together numerous themes with far-reaching implications for ethics, philosophy of religion, philosophy of action, philosophical theology, and of course philosophy of mind.

Getting Even: Forgiveness and Its Limits by Jeffrie G. Murphy. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003. Pp. ix + 138. Cloth \$22.95; Paper \$16.95.

PAUL REASONER, Bethel University

One approaches the task of reviewing *Getting Even* by Jeffrie Murphy with some trepidation. With a title like that, what if Prof. Murphy does not like the review and decides to get even? These worries are not entirely misplaced, since he states, “Speaking (as almost any Irishman can) from extensive personal experience as a rather vindictive person, I believe that I have often gotten even with people by actions that were moderate and proportional” (p. 24). But I will risk the review since this is a splendid book in which Murphy offers a defense of vindictive passions and a plea for a “cautious and critical commitment to forgiveness” (p. 38). From the title of the book, *Getting Even: Forgiveness and Its Limits*, one might think that he is simply offering a defense of vindictiveness and praise for getting even, but the overall tone of the book is more balanced—indeed, Murphy is careful to say that he is only offering two cheers (not three) for vindictiveness (p. 26), and his study of vindictive passions leads us into a deepened understanding of forgiveness. Murphy has published many pieces on forgiveness (including *Forgiveness and Mercy*, co-authored with Jean Hampton) and here he continues some of his previous themes and examines new ones as well. A strong bibliography, with some of the entries grouped topically, will also serve readers well.

Getting Even is framed in terms of the question of how we should respond to evil. Much of the book, as indicated in the title, is concerned with two possible responses to evil—vindictiveness and forgiveness—and their proper place and balance. While framing the response to evil in this way suggests that one is either entertaining vindictive passions or forgiving, Murphy recognizes responses to evil between those two options, for example simply being hurt or disappointed by wrong done to one (p. 3).