

Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers

Volume 21 | Issue 3

Article 9

7-1-2004

Kevin Corcoran, ed., SOUL, BODY, AND SURVIVAL: ESSAYS ON THE METAPHYSICS OF HUMAN PERSONS

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Recommended Citation

Reppert, Victor (2004) "Kevin Corcoran, ed., SOUL, BODY, AND SURVIVAL: ESSAYS ON THE METAPHYSICS OF HUMAN PERSONS," *Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers*: Vol. 21 : Iss. 3 , Article 9.

DOI: 10.5840/faithphil200421330

Available at: <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/faithandphilosophy/vol21/iss3/9>

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BOOK REVIEWS

Soul, Body, and Survival: Essays on the metaphysics of Human Persons, edited by Kevin Corcoran. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001. Pp. 252. \$49.95 (cloth), \$21.95 (paper).

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In the inaugural volume of *Faith and Philosophy* Alvin Plantinga wrote what I like to call the Declaration of Independence for Christian philosophers, the famous "Advice to Christian Philosophers." In that essay Plantinga maintained that Christian philosophers should not allow what seems plausible to the philosophical community at large to determine how one goes about reflecting on philosophical issues. Thinking through questions in ethics, or metaphysics, or epistemology, one can and should tackle those issues using what we believe to be true as Christians, without having to justify those Christian perspectives to the wider philosophical community.

I believe that there are few fields in philosophy where Plantinga's advice is more needed than in contemporary philosophy of mind. If you look at what might be regarded as "mainstream" philosophy of mind, as represented by books in the MIT/Bradford series, you find three assumptions made:

1. Cartesian Dualism is a dismissible position; so implausible that one hardly needs an argument to reject it.
2. The only alternative to Cartesian Dualism is some version of physicalism.
3. Theistic metaphysics is irrelevant to reflection in the philosophy of mind. In assessing the plausibility of a position, one must do so from the point of view of atheistic philosophical naturalism.

Soul, Body, and Survival, edited by Kevin Corcoran, calls all of these assumptions into question. The first section of the book is devoted to the merits and demerits of Cartesian dualism. The second is devoted to alternatives to Cartesianism that fall outside the normal range of materialist positions. The third is devoted to the question of whether a materialist theory of mind is compatible with Christian doctrines of the future life.

The very first essay in the book is a defense of Cartesian Dualism, by



John Foster. For Foster, Cartesianism is committed to three claims:

1. The mental is *sui generis*, existing independently of the physical and not in any way reducible to it.
2. Mental states inhere in a thinking thing or substance, not in a bundle.
3. Mental states do not have locations in space.

Perhaps a fourth position might be added to the set of the positions on dualism, namely

4. Souls are created individually by God *ex nihilo*; they do not emerge from pre-existing material states.

Indeed, Foster adverts to God's creative activity in response to the claim that physical nature does not seem to have the resources to produce non-physical objects.

Jaegwon Kim's essay "Lonely Souls: Causality and Substance Dualism" comes from a philosopher who operates out of the physicalist tradition. Unlike some in that tradition, however, he has been very serious about pressing difficulties for otherwise popular forms of physicalism in the area of mental causation. In this paper he presents some problems for dualism in the area of mental causation. He reconsiders the familiar objection to Descartes' dualism that dualism is untenable because we cannot see how something nonphysical can interact with something physical. As Kim points out, this is often presented with no or almost no supporting argumentation. However, Kim does supply some argumentation to put some meat on the bones of the familiar objection, by generating what he calls the pairing problem.

Kim maintains that a spatial framework is necessary for the existence of a causal relationship amongst objects. If two rifles are fired and two people are killed, what criteria would lead us to correctly pair the causes and effects? The answer, says Kim, is the spatial relationships between deadly bullets and the victims. Kim also points out that lack of a spatial relation between a suspect and the victim is often sufficient to ground an alibi in a murder case. But since souls are not spatial, spatial pairing relationships between souls and matter cannot exist. Kim considers the possibility that souls have spatial locations, but he finds some difficulties with that idea as well, but he thinks this is problematic as well. We need to locate souls at a particular point in space, and claims that it would beg the question to locate the souls in the brain. Second, he argues that to locate souls in space would require that not more than one soul could occupy a location in space, that is, something like the impenetrability of matter would have to obtain. But he asks, if this is so, "why aren't such souls just material objects, albeit of a very special, and strange kind?" And he thinks the soul found in a geometrical point could not have a structure capable of accounting for the rich mental life that humans have. Finally, he is suspicious of any solutions to the problem dictated by "dualist commitments." He says "We shouldn't do philosophy by first deciding what conclusions we want to

prove, and then posit convenient entities and premises to get us where we want to go."

First of all, it needs to be made clear just what it is for something to be a material thing. The book makes it evident that the concept of "materiality" and "matter" need to be made clearer than they are. This is especially imperative for Christians who want to go as far as possible in accommodating their faith to "materialism." Orthodox materialism is a corollary of philosophical naturalism, and is typically committed to at least this: that the physical order is causally closed, and that whatever other states exist supervene on the physical; that is, there cannot be a difference without a physical difference. But what is more, physicalism is committed to the idea that the physical order is mechanistic, that is, purposive explanations cannot be basic-level explanations at the physical level. If the material is defined in this way, then it seems to me that something could have a spatial location, and it could also possess impenetrability, and still not be material in the orthodox sense. It could still be the case that the mental is *sui generis* and fundamental, and one of Foster's dualist theses would still be true.

Timothy O'Connor's essay is a defense of just this claim. Although he rejects Cartesianism because it fails to provide a metaphysics that makes the body and soul constitute a unified system, he nonetheless thinks that the mind can have not merely emergent properties, but also emergent causal powers. In particular, the power to perform actions that are free in the libertarian sense is possible even though there are no separate individuals, either in space or not in space, which perform these free actions. But of course this is going to make them causally independent of the physical order and sufficiently free from the nexus of non-mental causation to have libertarian free will. For if we accept the orthodox physicalist position that the physical is closed, the physical is mechanistic, and mental states supervene on the physical, then all mental states, including human choices, are determined by an essentially non-mental physical world. If libertarianism is true, then the fact of choice cannot be explained in terms of a physical substratum that makes no choices. To accept libertarian free will while retaining a physicalist ontology requires attributing to matter powers and liabilities when it is part of a mind that it lacks when it is, say, part of a rock. And from the point of view of materialist orthodoxy, this is simply not acceptable. Of course, it should be pointed out that O'Connor is not attempting to stay within the framework of orthodox materialism.

Taliaferro's essay, "Emergentism and Consciousness," is a Cartesian response to Colin McGinn's *The Mysterious Flame: Conscious Minds in a Material World*. McGinn is one of a substantial number of philosophers who see a serious difficulty in understanding how minds could exist in a material world, who avoids the tendency to eliminate or functionalize the mind, but who nonetheless resist the temptation to accept any form of substance dualism. In particular, McGinn thinks that no solution to the problems that arise from a materialist perspective can be alleviated by accepting a dualism backed up by a wider theistic metaphysics. If there are problems with materialism, the cure (dualism backed by theism) is worse than the disease. McGinn's objections, and objections like them, are in my view the main reason why many philosophers think that while materialism may

have a lot of problems, but nevertheless it won't do to resolve these problems with a change of metaphysics, either by adopting dualism or by adopting theism.

McGinn maintains this for four reasons. 1) Dualism leaves us with an exaggerated picture of the mind-body relation. 2) Dualism leads to epiphenomenalism. Matter determines what happens in the world, so if you have a soul, it has nothing to do with what you do. Your body could do all the same things it does in a dualist world if you were a zombie, with no conscious mind. 3) If the mind is not physical then there could be ghosts, that is, disembodied persons. But there cannot be disembodied persons, so dualism cannot be true. 4) If dualism is true, then the soul would have to have arisen in the course of biological evolution. But biological evolution works with physical states and cannot produce a soul, so dualism is false. Finally, McGinn argues that if the existence of the mind is a mystery, introducing the mind of God to explain the mystery only makes the mystery worse. We are better off attributing such mysteries to the limitations of our understanding, than to resolve them by appealing to a supernatural being.

In response, Taliaferro says that 1) Cartesianism does not require a radical separation of mind and body, there can be extensive dependence and interaction between mind and body on the Cartesian view, and later he suggests that this is what you should expect if theism is true. 2) McGinn assumes that, necessarily, the same physiological state will issue in the same behavior, but why assume that all causal relations are necessary? To this I would have added that if dualism is true, and there is interaction between the mind and the body, then the physical order can be expected to run differently than it would if there were no minds interacting with the body. Epiphenomenalism is a consequence of dualism only if one assumes the principle of the causal closure of the physical, a highly question-begging doctrine to assume in a debate with a Cartesian! 3) Is the idea of disembodied existence coherent? Taliaferro, based on some comments by Galen Strawson, suggests that McGinn gratuitously assumes that the idea of matter is clear to us, and that consciousness is what needs to be made sense of. But is this an accurate picture? Our understanding of matter, as understood by modern physics, is far more complex and obscure than any conception we might have of the soul. 4) A theist does not need to presume that the soul resulted from biological evolution. But this brings us to McGinn's final point, that to bring in theism is to essentially beg the question, bringing in a mind to explain the existence of the mind. But Taliaferro reminds us that theists argue from the contingency of the physical world to the existence of God. Contingent states of affairs require explanation; necessary states of affairs may not need explanation. Also, it seems to me that McGinn's objection again presupposes that mind is what needs explanation and that matter is self-explanatory. While nontheists may choose their own starting point, theists hypothesize that if there is a God, then we can understand human consciousness as the work of a conscious intelligent being. This underscores one of the volume's major themes, the relevance of theistic metaphysics to the philosophy of mind.

Eric Olson's article defends the claim that if one is going to accept dualism, then one ought to accept a pure dualism, according to which you are

your soul and you have a body, rather than accept the idea, commonly propounded, that you are a compound of body and soul. Stewart Goetz argues that the modal argument for dualism, offered by Swinburne, Taliaferro and others, begs the question against the materialist, and that if an argument for dualism is to be found, it is what he calls the Simple Argument, according to which human beings, unlike physical bodies, are simple entities.

While the status of full-blown Cartesian dualism is certainly not as dead as many have supposed, nevertheless there are alternatives to Cartesianism which certainly contradict orthodox physicalism. One of these is William Hasker's Emergent Dualism, defended at much greater length in his book *The Emergent Self*,³ which maintains that the mind or soul is a distinct substance from the body, but the mind or soul is produced by the human body. This is more than property emergence. A radically different individual is what (or rather who) is emergent. By taking this position he seeks to avoid the philosophical problems of physicalism and the difficulties involved in what he takes to be the excessive cleavage between mind and body found in Cartesian Dualism. He seems fully aware that physical matter, as ordinarily understood, is not thought to have the potential to create a separate mind, and, as a result, I am inclined to suppose that his position is wildly implausible on atheistic assumptions. But, as Hasker makes explicit, he is a theist, so is it possible that God created the mind by giving to matter the capacity of generating it?

Brain Leftow defends a Thomistic view of the mind that makes the person a single thing that is a combination of form (the soul) and matter (the body). However, he does not see this as a form of dualism because Aquinas, following Aristotle, denies that there are any purely material objects: even rocks are combinations of matter and form. But we have to wonder if Thomas's view of the relation of the soul to the body makes sense unless we are prepared to accept Thomas's view of nature as a whole, which is in conflict with the mechanistic understanding of the physical which has dominated scientific thought for the last five centuries.

E. J. Lowe defends the claim that the self is a simple being which must be different from the physical body, using a version of the Unity of Consciousness Argument. However, this does not necessarily lead to Cartesianism, because the self could be spatial. Lynne Baker's piece is also a defense of a position she has defended in greater detail elsewhere. Her view is that a person is constituted by, but not identical to, a physical human organism. She identifies her position as materialist, but in fact her first book on the philosophy of mind is entitled *Saving Belief: The Case Against Physicalism*,⁴ and that book is mentioned by Stephen Davis's essay as one reason why he rejects materialism and now accepts dualism. Orthodox physicalism requires that explanations in terms of mental states be "cashed out" in terms of a more fundamental physical substratum, and so Baker's materialism would not pass muster with materialists like Dennett, the Churchlands, or even more moderate, "retentive" (as opposed to eliminative) materialists. It seems that she does accept the first of Foster's dualist theses, but not the second or third. Just as when we talk about dualism it is evident that there is a variety of positions that fall under that umbrella, it is equally evident that there are hybrid positions available

that may be called by the name materialism but would not be considered orthodox by most card-carrying materialists.

The final section concerns the issue of whether mind-body dualism is required in order for there to be the kind of post-mortem survival required by Christian doctrine. Trenton Merricks is a Christian mind-body physicalist who maintains that person is identical to their physical body. He addresses the criticism that we could not enjoy a post-mortem existence on the assumption that physicalism is true. He says that this claim is based on the idea that there are criteria of personal identity over time, but he argues that there are no such criteria. Therefore, there is no reason to believe that physicalism renders post-mortem existence impossible. Kevin Corcoran employs a version of the Constitution View to support post-mortem survival given materialism. However, John Cooper argues that, regardless of what may be logically possible, the biblical understanding of postmortem survival requires that humans be able to exist at least temporarily without their bodies. And this, of course, would require some form of dualism. Stephen Davis argues that while postmortem survival is compatible with the doctrine of resurrection, he himself accepts dualism on philosophical grounds.

As a whole, this book is a very exciting one from the point of view of the mind-body problem. Rather than working with the textbook alternatives of "Cartesian dualism" and the varieties of materialism, there are numerous middle positions, some of which may be difficult to even categorize as materialist or dualist. Perhaps a new set of categories should be employed:

1. Standard materialism. In my view someone counts as a standard materialist if they believe that a) physics is mechanistic and to be described in wholly non-mental terms, b) physics is causally closed and c) all states that are not physical supervene on physical states.
2. Non-standard materialism. There are no nonmaterial substances, but nonetheless one or more of the three essential doctrines of materialism is denied.
3. Standard (Cartesian) dualism. All three of Foster's three main doctrines are accepted, and that the soul is not in space.
4. Non-standard dualism. There are two substances, but the mental substance is in space, and may be generated by the physical body.

I would end with one further comment. Philosophical naturalists, as I understand it, are pushed by the constraints of their overall metaphysics to conclude that Standard Materialism is true. But if there are good philosophical reasons to reject Standard Materialism, (as I believe that there are), then some arguments from the phenomenon of mind can be developed for preferring a theistic world-view to a naturalistic one. Debates on these matters have only just begun!

NOTES

1. Alvin Plantinga, "Advice to Christian Philosophers," *Faith and Philosophy* vol. 1, no. 3 (1984): 253-71.

2. Colin McGinn, *The Mysterious Flame: Conscious Minds in a Material World* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).
3. William Hasker, *The Emergent Self* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999).
4. Lynne Rudder Baker, *Saving Belief: The Case Against Physicalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).
5. For an attempt of this kind, see my *C.S. Lewis's Dangerous Idea: A Defense of the Argument from Reason* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2003).

Emotions: An Essay in Aid of Moral Psychology, by Robert C. Roberts. Cambridge University Press, 2003. Pp. 357. \$70.00 (Cloth), \$25.00 (Paper).

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This book is the first part of a projected two-volume study of the emotions and their place in moral personality. The volume is ambitious, densely written, and thoroughly argued. Since Roberts' primary concern is to use conceptual analysis to elucidate the nature and moral import of emotions, in chapter one he defends conceptual analysis against critics. In chapter two, he develops his own theory of the nature of emotions. He applies the theory to many particular emotions in chapter three. Chapter four closes the book with an exploration of assorted topics, such as error in emotion, emotions and feelings, emotions and the self, true and false emotions, emotions and literature, and emotional education.

In chapter one, Roberts describes conceptual analysis as "... particularly based on collection of and reflection about examples from everyday human life, many of which can only be understood in the light of a fairly rich narrative background" (p. 5). He defends this method of understanding emotions against two lines of attack, one from Amelie O. Rorty and another from Paul E. Griffiths (among others). The upshot of the labyrinthine analysis of Rorty's view is that emotion is a wide-ranging and complex topic. According to Roberts, a useful understanding of emotion should explain why some concepts, such as anger and fear, are paradigm cases of what English speakers regard as emotion, whereas notions like surprise and startle are marginal cases (see p. 14).

An examination of the second line of criticism of conceptual analysis follows the laborious treatment of Rorty. The second criticism comes from those who believe that emotion should be understood in scientific terms. Roberts' arguments about purely scientific analyses of emotions are genuinely helpful in ferreting out useful methodological approaches to a truly complex topic. Roberts' arguments lead him to the commonsense conclusion that emotions are best studied from a variety of disciplinary angles (see p. 36). Though Roberts endorses conceptual analysis, he is also aware of its limitations (see pp. 57-9).

In chapter two, he uses conceptual analysis to develop his own theory of emotions. Before turning to the substance of the view, two preliminary