

# Separable Souls: Dualism, Selfhood, and the Possibility of Life after Death

C. Stephen Evans

What should Christians think about the constitution of the self? When the Heidelberg Catechism says "my only comfort in life and death is that I belong, body and soul, to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ," is this language to be taken as sober metaphysics or is it merely a poetic flourish? Recently a number of Christian philosophers, theologians, and scientists have argued that the traditional Christian view of the self, a dualistic account that sees human persons as having an immaterial soul as well as a physical body, should be rejected in favor of a monistic, physicalist view.

There are various motivations for this move, some grounded in theology, others in philosophy, and others in science. A common argument of the theological type is that the monistic view of the self is the biblical one; dualism represents the deleterious influence of Greek philosophy on the Christian tradition. A common philosophical criticism is that a dualism of mind and body cannot account for interaction between the two entities. The third type of argument typically claims that dualism, while logically possible, is increasingly implausible in light of recent scientific findings, particularly with respect to neurophysiological research.

In this paper I want to focus mainly on the third or scientific type of alleged difficulty for dualism, though I will very briefly indicate some reasons why I am less concerned about the first two types of arguments. In my view the claim that Scripture teaches a monistic materialism is mistaken; I believe that John Cooper has shown this in his book *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate*.<sup>1</sup> Cooper sees three possible biblical views of life after death: (1) A gap theory: future resurrection with a period of non-existence between death and the resurrection. (2) Immediate resurrection upon death. (3) The traditional view: there is a future resurrection with continued existence ("the intermediate period") between death and that resurrection.

There are some scriptural passages consistent with the "gap" theory and some others that are consistent with the immediate resurrection theory. However, each is contradicted by the passages consistent with the other view, and no passages plainly teach either of those views.<sup>2</sup> The traditional view that the resurrection is a future event, but that the deceased believer enjoys communion with Christ between death and that resurrection, is the only view that is consistent with all of the scriptural evidence and that seems to be plainly taught in some passages. This third view plainly presupposes a dualistic ontology, since the person must be distinct from his or her body to exist between the biological death of that body and the resurrection. (It is also at least arguable that without a dualistic ontology, the resurrection is not possible. There are difficulties in seeing how the new resurrected body can be identical to the body that died; I believe that it is the soul that continuously exists that makes the resurrected body to be the body of the person that died.)

Many of the alleged philosophical difficulties are problems that have been repeatedly answered. In any case, the most commonly cited problem, which is that a non-material reality cannot interact causally with a physical entity, is one that a Christian should not take seriously, since if such a principle held, God could neither create a physical world nor act within it. It is in any case odd, I think, for Christians to advocate a form of materialism on philosophical grounds, since a careful look at recent work on the mind-body problem clearly shows that materialism is in what could be called a state of crisis.<sup>3</sup> Although most

philosophers today are materialists, many will acknowledge that materialism currently has no solution to two major problems with respect to the nature of mind.

First, contemporary materialists do not know how to explain consciousness. The problem is so severe that one group of materialists, the so-called "new mysterians," has more or less given up, conceding that consciousness simply is a mystery that materialism will never explain.<sup>4</sup> The second difficult problem for materialists is explaining the nature of intentionality or "aboutness." Many mental states of acts have meaning, and it is not clear how a physical entity or state can be meaningful without a mind to provide that meaning. Given these difficulties, why are most philosophers materialists about human persons? The only answer that makes sense to me is that they are materialists about everything. Philosophers who are metaphysical naturalists and who are committed to materialism believe that there must somehow be a true materialist account of the human self, even if they have no idea what that account may be. Christians, however, surely should not share this assumption.

In any case I believe it is the third type of problem that is most influential in pressing against dualism today. For example, Nancey Murphy, while admitting that scientific evidence does not prove that dualism is false, claims that "recent scientific advances do indeed provide scientific evidence for [physicalism]".<sup>5</sup> After discussing some recent work in neurophysiology, Murphy claims that non-reductive physicalism is "not merely a philosophical thesis, but also the hard core of a scientific research program." She concludes that there is "ample scientific evidence" for the physicalism she espouses.<sup>6</sup>

Even William Hasker, who in the end espouses a type of dualism and rejects physicalism, sees contemporary scientific evidence as presenting problems for traditional dualistic views. He argues that there are two problems with traditional Cartesian dualism: "The first is that it cannot plausibly account for the extensive and intimate dependence of mind on brain that we find to exist."<sup>7</sup> While dualism is compatible with mind-body interaction, it does not seem to Hasker to fit comfortably with the detailed scientific findings about the way that the mind is dependent on the brain for its activity. The second problem Hasker sees is that dualism cannot plausibly be incorporated into an evolutionary account of human origins. Of course some scientific creationists might say "so much the better for dualism" at this point, but Hasker wants a view of mind and body that is consistent with evolutionary theory.

In what follows I shall argue for two claims: (1) Recent advances in neurophysiology give us no evidence in favor of physicalism; the plausibility of at least some forms of dualism, rightly conceived, has not been diminished at all. Scientific findings have given us reason to reject particular versions of dualism but not to reject all versions. There are some dualistic views that are plainly incompatible with scientific findings, but these findings have not affected the plausibility of other forms of dualism at all. (2) Recent forms of so-called non-reductive materialism or physicalism advocated by Christians may, when closely examined (depending on how some crucial interpretive questions are answered), turn out not to be materialistic views at all, but rather forms of dualism. Such views are at least close enough to dualism that a dualist may incorporate some of their features into a dualistic account. Both of my theses turn crucially on what is to count as "dualism," as well as what is to count as "materialism."

Before turning to those issues, I need to make one important terminological note. In this paper I shall use the terms "mind" "soul," "person," and "self" more or less synonymously, to refer to whatever a person refers to when that person uses the term "I" to refer to himself or herself as a conscious agent. Of course this terminological practice does not determine whether or not that entity that is referred to in this way is a material thing, a non-material thing, or some combination of the two.

### ***Descartes' Dualism***

The term "dualism" is often used in an unclear way that runs together vastly different positions. However, responsible advocates of dualism today clearly distinguish between, for example, Platonic dualism and Cartesian dualism. Thomas Aquinas is interpreted as a dualist by some, and if that is correct, then Thomistic dualism represents yet another type.<sup>8</sup> Recently William Hasker has defended a kind of dualism that he terms "emergent dualism," which he regards as distinct from all of these other kinds. So there are major differences between dualisms. Platonic dualism, for example, holds that the soul pre-exists the body

and is naturally immortal, and combines these claims with a value hierarchy in which the non-physical soul is seen as superior to the body. Descartes' dualism, however, does not incorporate any of these claims. What features must a view incorporate to count as a version of mind-body dualism?

I shall take as my starting-point Descartes, whose credentials as a dualist are unimpeachable. More precisely, I shall take one crucial passage from Descartes, part of his argument that the soul is distinct from the body:

And first of all, because I know that all things which I apprehend clearly and distinctly can be created by God as I apprehend them, it suffices that I am able to apprehend one thing apart from another clearly and distinctly in order to be certain that the one is different from the other, since they may be made to exist in separation at least by the omnipotence of God; . . . And although possibly (or rather certainly, as I shall say in a moment) I possess a body with which I am very intimately conjoined, yet because, on the one side, I have a clear and extended idea of myself inasmuch as I am only a thinking and unextended thing, and as, on the other, I possess a distinct idea of body, inasmuch as it is only an extended and unthinking thing, it is certain that this I [that is to say, my soul by which I am what I am], is entirely and absolutely distinct from my body, and can exist without it.<sup>9</sup>

Let us focus primarily on this one passage, since Descartes himself may advocate different versions of dualism at different times.

It is crucial to note that Descartes does not use as a premise the proposition that the soul and the body exist separately. Nor is that proposition his conclusion; the conclusion is that soul and body are distinct things, not that they exist separately. A premise of the argument is that God could cause his soul and body to exist separately, not that God has done so. Since God can do whatever is logically possible, this amounts only to the weak claim that it is logically possible for Descartes' soul and body to exist separately. This is not only weaker than the claim that soul and body exist separately, but weaker than the claim that it is physically possible for them to be separated. As the reference to God's omnipotence makes clear, Descartes' premise is consistent with the claim that the soul could exist separately from the body only as a result of a miracle. All that is required is that the two are separable, even if they are not in fact separate and even if it is physically impossible for them to exist separately. Far from claiming that the soul and body currently exist separately, in the "Synopsis" to Meditation VI, Descartes claims only that he has shown "that the mind of man is really distinct from the body, and at the same time that the two are so closely joined together that they form, so to speak, a single thing."<sup>10</sup> Soul and body therefore currently do not exist separately; they form a union. However, they must be seen as two distinct entities since it is possible for one of them, the soul or mind, to exist without the other. (Presumably, the body can also exist without the soul, and does so in the case of a corpse, though not as a living body.)

In an earlier essay I described as "minimal dualism" the claim that it is possible for the mind or soul to exist without its current body.<sup>11</sup> Suppose someone believes that though a human person can exist without his or her current body that it is not possible for a person to exist without some body or other. Is that view a form of dualism? It is at least in the neighborhood of dualism, because such a person is committed to the view that the self, soul, or mind (recall that I here use these terms indistinguishably to designate whatever it is that people refer to when they refer to themselves as conscious beings) is a distinct entity from the body that the person currently has. Perhaps, however, this is not true dualism, because such a person is not committed to the claim that this distinct soul is a non-physical entity. For example, the person might believe that the soul is necessarily constituted by some body or other, even if it not itself identical with that body.<sup>12</sup> For the moment let us leave it an open question whether such a "constitution theory" should count as a form of dualism. For now I shall claim only that any view that holds that it is logically possible that the soul exist without a body at all is dualistic.

It is not really surprising that this minimal claim is sufficient to make a theory dualistic. Since identity is a necessary relation, if a person is identical to his or her body, then that person is necessarily identical to the body, and it is not possible that the person exist apart from that body. The logical possibility of a separate existence is sufficient to make the mind a distinct entity from the body.

Perhaps someone might reply at this point that although this minimal dualism is indeed a form of dualism, it is not really a significant form. To constitute a significant form of dualism it must be more robust than minimal dualism. I disagree with this claim that minimal dualism is insignificant. The possibility that I might survive the death of my body seems to me to be a very significant possibility. One might think that for this possibility to be significant, it must be a "real" possibility and more than merely a logical possibility.<sup>13</sup> However, it is not clear whether what is "really" possible in this case differs very much from what is logically possible. Suppose it to be true that my survival after death would require miraculous action on the part of God. Such a minimal dualism would entail that I am not "naturally immortal," however this phrase be understood. However, I see no reason why a Christian dualist should be committed to the natural immortality of the soul. A Christian dualist can happily rest content with the possibility that I could survive the death of my body only if God should will this. If "all things are possible with God," then such a logical possibility is a "real" one.

However, I am willing to concede that minimal dualism is not the strongest possible form and that there are other forms of dualism that would be more significant. What would we need to add to minimal dualism to make it more significant? I think that the most plausible candidate would be having causal powers. Let us say that a view is committed (at least) to significant minimal dualism just in case it holds both that it is logically possible for the soul to exist without the body and that this same soul has causal powers, such that it can affect the physical world and be affected by that world (perhaps by having the power to affect and be affected by its body). It is hard to see how anyone could deny that a view that accepts a soul that can interact with the body and that could survive the death of the body is not a significant form of dualism. One possibility might be that such a soul could only exercise its causal powers when it has been separated from the body. Such a dualism would I think be less interesting because it would imply that the soul can be ignored in explanations of the actions of the person in this life. So let us stipulate that the causal powers the soul enjoys must be causal powers that it possesses while still united with its body. Having clarified a form of dualism, I shall proceed to argue for my two theses, which can now be made more precise: (1) Contemporary scientific findings are completely consistent with significant minimal dualism and do not increase the probability that physicalism is true over against this form of dualism. (2) Some contemporary views that are advanced as "non-reductive materialism" or "non-reductive physicalism" are very close to dualism, and may actually (depending on how they are interpreted) be forms of significant minimal dualism.

### ***Contemporary Scientific Findings***

What are the scientific findings that are alleged to create problems for dualism? Chiefly, the findings have to do with the discovery that mental functions of various kinds are dependent on localized brain activity. Obviously, for ethical reasons many of the discoveries have been made as a result of injuries suffered by individuals to particular regions of the brain or illnesses that required surgery to the brain. A famous example is Phineas Gage, a railway worker who in 1848 had a tamping iron go through his skull and underwent a significant personality change. Drawing on this case and many others, Antonio Damasio has argued that much emotional functioning is located in a specific region of the brain, an area of the prefrontal cortex.<sup>14</sup> Distinguished neuroscientist Malcolm Jeeves in a recent article summarizes some of the other evidence. The discoveries include Roger Sperry's "split-brain" studies. It turns out that when patients have had the corpus callosum severed, which connects the two hemispheres of the brain, they appear to develop two distinct "centers of consciousness;" one side of the brain in such a case seems unaware of what the other side is up to.<sup>15</sup> Jeeves also notes how specific regions of the brain can result in quite specific forms of mental dysfunction: "Some patients can write good prose but not read it, some cannot identify a familiar face but can read its emotions . . ."<sup>16</sup> A host of evidence of this sort is available, leading Jeeves to conclude: "the same take-home message emerged from all of these studies, whether human or animal, namely, the remarkable localization of function in the brain and the specificity of the neural substrate underlying mental events. As each advance occurred, mind and brain were seen to be ever more tightly linked together."<sup>17</sup>

What exactly is it about these findings that are supposed to create problems for dualism? Presumably, the mere fact that the mind is causally impacted by the brain is not a problem, since most dualists have been

interactionists eager to maintain that the body (and indeed the wider physical world), can in some way affect the mind. Is it a problem for dualism that this causal action takes place through the brain, rather than, say, the heart as Aristotle thought? It is hard to see why this should be a problem. Is it a problem that the causal effects should be the product of specific regions of the brain? Why should the fact that the source of the effects are localized regions of the brain, rather than the brain as a whole, be a problem for the dualist? It is hard for me to see why dualism should be thought to entail that the causal dependence of the mind on the brain should only stem from holistic states of the brain rather than more localized happenings.

Perhaps the problem could be expressed as follows: Certainly the dualist can allow that the body through the brain can have an impact on the mind. However, if the mind is a distinct entity from the brain, we would not expect the mind to be so completely dependent on the brain for its functioning. Dualism may be compatible with some causal dependence, but not with the fundamental causal dependence science has discovered. In effect the critic of dualism here asserts that the acceptance of dualism would lead us to predict less causal dependence than we actually find. However, I see no reason why a defender of at least some forms of dualism should accept this claim. I shall begin by arguing that minimal dualism certainly need not lead to any predictions about causal dependence that have been falsified by contemporary science. Later I shall suggest the same is true for significant minimal dualism.

So far as I can see there is no reason why an advocate of minimal dualism should not expect the mind to be fundamentally dependent on the brain for its functioning, at least in this life, barring a miracle. We did not need neurophysiology to come to know that a person whose head is bashed in with a club quickly loses his or her ability to think or have any conscious processes. Why should we not think of neurophysiological findings as giving us detailed, precise knowledge of something that human beings have always known, or at least could have known, which is that the mind (at least in this mortal life) requires and depends on a functioning brain? We now know a lot more than we used to know about precisely how the mind depends on the body. However, that the mind depends on the body, at least prior to death, is surely not something discovered in the twentieth century.

In any case, even if such findings are problematic for some forms of dualism, such as Platonic dualism and perhaps even Descartes in some places, they are not a problem for the minimal dualist. Minimal dualism seems compatible with the most intimate and complete dependence of the mind on the brain imaginable. Suppose it is the case that God has created the mind or soul of the person in such a way that it is in this life completely dependent on the brain for its functioning. Such a scenario does not rule out the possibility that at death God might perform a miracle and continue the conscious existence of the person without the body, which it has been causally dependent upon up until that time. All that is required for minimal dualism is that this is a logical possibility, and such a logical possibility is surely compatible with all known contemporary scientific findings about consciousness and the brain.

Perhaps someone will object at this point that such minimal dualism is not worth our attention. Perhaps the problem with a minimal dualism that is compatible with contemporary neurophysiological findings is that such a view leads to a view of the mind as causally inert in this life. If all of the causal work during human earthly existence is done at the neurophysiological level, then one might argue that the mind, even if it exists, is an unimportant aspect of the self. A dualism that amounts to epiphenomenalism<sup>18</sup> is a poor thing, a view not worth defending, since the self as a responsible moral agent is lost if that self cannot exert causal powers. A self with no causal powers could not, for example, be a self that could perform morally responsible actions. To take dualism seriously, we at least need significant minimal dualism.

### ***The Causal Powers of Mind***

This line of thought seems right to me, or at least contains something that is right. Perhaps we might conceivably make scientific discoveries that would lead us to think that the mind is indeed epiphenomenal. I actually doubt this could happen, since the discovery that the mind is epiphenomenal would imply that our experience of ourselves as conscious agents is illusory; however, all of science including neurophysiology depends on our self-understanding as conscious agents. It is therefore hard to see how any scientific findings could give us rational grounds for doubting the reality of our status as conscious agents.

However, even if we thought that such scientific findings were possible, it appears to be the case (fortunately) that no findings that imply the mind is epiphenomenal have actually been discovered. At least that is a claim made by those who call themselves non-reductive materialists, the same non-reductive materialists who think that scientific findings make dualism implausible. I think these non-reductive materialists are right to say that the mind has causal powers and that such a view is consistent with contemporary neurophysiology. In short, I want here to enlist the testimony of a group of non-reductive materialists, the authors of *Whatever Happened to the Soul?*, on behalf of the causal efficacy of the mental. These thinkers, although they believe (mistakenly in my view) that scientific findings cut against dualism, do not see these findings as any way implying that the mind is causally inert.

These authors include Warren Brown, Nancey Murphy, Newton Malony, and Malcolm Jeeves. I shall pay special attention to Murphy and Jeeves, since they focus on philosophical issues. These authors term their view "non-reductive physicalism." (I assume here, as the authors themselves seem to do, that they basically agree in their views and are presenting one position.) Murphy says that the non-reductive physicalist view of the mind is that it is composed of emergent, holistic properties that are in some way "supervenient" on physical states of the body. She defines the concept of supervenience in the following way: "Property S is supervenient on property B if and only if something instantiates S in virtue of (as a non-causal consequent of) its instantiating B under circumstance C."<sup>19</sup> Very roughly, this can be understood as a way of maintaining that mental properties are had by persons in virtue of their physical properties, and she therefore affirms an "ontological reductionism," in which the mind is wholly constituted by physical states of affairs.<sup>20</sup>

The authors of *Whatever Happened to the Soul*, however, deny that this ontological reductionism implies a causal reductionism. They vigorously affirm the reality of what is variously termed "downward causation," "top-down causation," or "whole-part causation," in which the mind causally affects the body.<sup>21</sup> Murphy says that "[c]onsciousness and religious awareness are emergent properties and they have top-down causal influence on the body."<sup>22</sup> Malcolm Jeeves, for example, describes the relation between mind and brain in the following manner. He wishes to think of mind and brain as "two aspects" of one complex, intertwined system:

In this sense in complementary fashion mental activity and behavior depend on the physically determinant operations of the brain, itself a physico-chemical system. When that system goes wrong or is disordered, there are changes in its capabilities for running the system that we describe as the mind or as mental activity. And, likewise, if the mind or the mental activity results in behavior of particular kinds, this in turn may result in temporary or chronic changes in the physicochemical makeup and activity of the brain, its physical substrate. Thus, this ever-tightening link does not minimize the importance of the mind or the brain in this unitary complex system.<sup>23</sup>

As an example of someone who affirms the causal significance of the mind, Jeeves cites one of the leading neuroscientists, Roger Sperry, who clearly thinks the scientific evidence, far from ruling out causal power to the mind, supports the view that the mind has such power: "Consciousness exerts potent causal effects on the interplay of cerebral operations." Sperry goes so far as to affirm that the mind plays a kind of executive role: "In the position of top command at the highest levels in the hierarchy of brain organization, the subjective properties were seen to exert control over the biophysical and chemical activities at subordinate levels."<sup>24</sup>

It is not surprising that non-reductive materialists wish to see the mind as having such causal powers, since if mental activities are completely causally determined by physical events at the micro-level, it is hard to see why one should be a non-reductive materialist. If the non-reductive materialist is to make a case against the reductive materialist (such as the identity theorist or the eliminative materialist), then it seems necessary to argue that the mind must not only have emergent properties, but must in some sense have causal powers. If the causal powers of the mind are completely a function of the micro-physical particles that are said to "realize" or "constitute" the mind, then it is difficult to resist the claim that the mind is itself "nothing but" a complex system of micro-particles.

### ***Is Non-Reductive Materialism Really a Form of Dualism?***

This leads to a dilemma for non-reductive materialists. They wish to affirm that neurophysiology supports the claim that the mind is a physical entity, without claiming that the mind is identical to a physical entity or that the behavior of persons is completely explicable in terms of neuroscience: "While all human behavior supervenes on the biological (genetic and neurological), little of it is reducible to biology."<sup>25</sup> Neuroscience is supposed to show us we do not need to posit a nonphysical soul or mind, but neuroscience had better not completely explain human behavior, since we must also make reference to conscious thoughts, beliefs, emotions, and other mental states to understand why we behave the way we do. The former claim is necessary to ground the materialism of Murphy, Jeeves, and company; the latter claim is necessary if they are to be non-reductive materialists.

The dilemma arises when we inquire about the nature of the "top-down causation" that the non-reductive materialist accepts. Are these mental states that have causal powers completely determined by the systems of micro-physical particles that are said to "realize" or "constitute" them or not? If the answer is yes, then it seems that causal reductionism cannot be resisted; talk of "top-down causation" is just a shorthand description for a complex process in which all the causal work is done at the micro-level. If the answer is no (and this is certainly the answer that Murphy and Jeeves seem to prefer), then why should we think that the mind is in fact simply a physical entity? Why should we say that the mind is merely constituted by the brain rather than saying it is an embodied mind? The former is the description preferred by the non-reductive physicalist; the latter is the way the situation would be described by a minimal significant dualist. But do the two expressions really describe different states of affairs? Recall that according to the minimal significant dualist, the mind may be intimately linked to and dependent in profound ways on the brain, at least in this life. But why think that it is simply a physical object at all, since it seems to possess properties and causal powers that can, according to supposed non-reductive physicalists, neither be described nor fully explained by biology or chemistry or physics?

It seems true that the mind is in some very fundamental ways dependent on the body to function. In saying this I am not merely saying that the mind is dependent on the body to publically manifest its functions; if my brain is injured, this may not simply prevent me from speaking or writing my thoughts, but could impair the thinking itself.<sup>26</sup> But does that fact in any way count as evidence against significant minimal dualism? Why should not Christian dualists wholeheartedly affirm that God has made human beings to be bodily creatures, embodied souls or selves, who are dependent on their bodies to carry on their existence as persons? If the non-reductive materialists are right in affirming what we might call the causal potency of the mind, and in claiming that the causal powers the mind possesses cannot be completely understood in terms of physical laws, why should we see the mind simply as a physical thing?

It is interesting to note here how proponents of non-reductive materialism seem to slip almost irresistibly into dualistic language. Jeeves speaks of the brain as the "physical substrate" of conscious activity, and Sperry talks of consciousness as a kind of executive agent that "exerts control" over the chemical and physical levels of reality. Consider the position of Lynne Rudder Baker, another well-known proponent of non-reductive materialism. Baker says that what makes something a person is having what she calls "a first-person perspective," that perspective from which "one can think about oneself as oneself and think about one's thoughts as one's own."<sup>27</sup> Human beings become persons when they acquire such a perspective.<sup>28</sup> Baker holds that what makes human persons human is that they are constituted by a human body.<sup>29</sup> However, on her view constitution is not identity, and thus the person is not identical to the physical body that constitutes him or her. Thus, it is possible for a human being to survive as a person even if he or she loses a human body and thus is no longer a human person:

But a person could start out as a human person and have organic parts replaced by synthetic parts until she was no longer a human person. With the persistence of her first-person perspective, she would still exist, but not as a human. If she ceased to be a person (that is, ceased to have a first-person perspective), however, she would cease to exist altogether.<sup>30</sup>

It is clear that on this view the person and the body are distinct entities. Why is this not a form of dualism? The most plausible answer is that Baker thinks that though the person is a distinct entity from the body, that it must always be constituted by some body or other, and perhaps for this reason Baker might say that

though the person and the body are distinct entities, both of these entities are physical.<sup>31</sup> But why does Baker think this is true? If we accept the idea that a human person could acquire a new synthetic body, say one made of plastic, and still retain his or her identity, and we also accept the reality of non-material substances, such as angels, then how can we know that a human person can only continue to exist when constituted by a physical substance? How do we know that it is impossible for this entity, the person, that Baker admits is distinct from the body, to be constituted by a non-physical substance, if we insist on using the language of constitution?

So far as I can see, the only reason Baker gives for ruling out such a possibility is that she assumes the truth of what she calls "commonsense materialism," in which each of the "concrete things" in the world "is ultimately constituted by aggregates of fundamental particles."<sup>32</sup> But here one person's common sense is surely another person's controversial metaphysical theory. People such as myself, who believe in God and other spirits, do not believe that all concrete things are composed of aggregates of fundamental particles. (Unless we are using "concrete thing" as a synonym for "material object." However, I take it that Baker is using the phrase to mean "really existent particular." She surely does not mean merely to say that all material objects are composed of matter. No dualist needs to deny that!) I would argue that such a view only seems like "common sense" to a small number of intellectuals whose worldview has been unduly shaped by naturalism.

Baker wants the relation of constitution to be a "relation of unity that is not identity, a relation that is intermediate between identity and separate existence."<sup>33</sup> However, it appears to me that this is precisely what significant minimal dualism offers. On this view the soul and body are intimately united and form a natural unity; they are distinct entities, however, since they are separable without being (for now) separate. So it seems to me that significant minimal dualism provides precisely what Baker claims to want.

Is non-reductive materialism a form of dualism? I think that depends on whether or not the non-reductive materialist is willing to accept the logical possibility that the person could exist without a body. If this is seen as possible, then non-reductive materialism is surely minimal dualism. And if this view is combined with the claim that the person has causal powers that cannot be completely understood by natural science, then it seems to me we have significant minimal dualism. If the non-reductive materialist denies the possibility that the person can survive without the body, then the position is not dualistic. But in that case the non-reductive materialist owes the dualist an explanation of why it is logically impossible for this admittedly distinct entity, the person, to exist without a body.

Of course the materialist might adopt a skeptical position here and doubt the logical possibility that a person could survive death, without firmly asserting that the logical impossibility of such a thing. One might well be skeptical about minimal dualism without being confident of the truth of materialism. Perhaps such a materialist will say the burden of proof is on the believer in the possibility of life after death. I have two things to say in response to this kind of skeptical position. First, an honest skepticism about whether dualism is true would be a great advance in the contemporary intellectual situation, where many thinkers dismiss dualism as unworthy of serious intellectual consideration. Secondly, Christian dualists may be quite happy to assume the burden of proof in this case, since they believe that after death believers enjoy "mystic sweet communion" with Christ and his saints, "those whose rest is won." If life after death is actual, it is surely possible.

### ***What the Dualist Can Learn from Non-Reductive Materialism***

If I am right that non-reductive materialism either is a form of dualism or is quite close to it, then it is not surprising that the dualist can incorporate some features of this view into his or her own position. There is a lot for the dualist to learn from the non-reductive materialist.

First of all, the dualist should not be afraid to embrace the claim that the person and body form a natural unity. This is already urged by contemporary dualists in a number of ways. Charles Taliaferro, for example, speaks of holistic dualism. John Cooper speaks of the soul and body forming a functional unity, and William Hasker thinks of the soul as a substance that emerges from physical processes, as a magnetic field emerges from a magnetized piece of iron. This means that the dualist should have no worries that scientific



discoveries that the soul is causally dependent on the body will make dualism implausible. Such findings might make some forms of dualism implausible, but it is precisely what we should expect if we are embodied souls, separable though not separate.

secondly, the dualist can learn from the non-reductive materialist how to think of mind-body interaction. I think that such interaction will empirically present itself as interaction between the person, understood as a whole, and the body, understood as a complex system of parts. This is "whole-part" or "top-down" causation.

Thirdly, the dualist can, like the non-reductive materialist, think of both person and body as having certain properties by virtue of the natural unity of soul and body. The non-reductive materialist, for example, characteristically says that the person, though not identical to the body, inherits many of the body's properties by virtue of the relation of constitution: "[B]ecause constitution is a relation of genuine unity, I inherit many of my body's properties, in particular its physical and biological properties."<sup>34</sup> The dualist can affirm that embodiment is also a relation that forms a genuine unity. Thus, contrary to some dualists who say that the soul has no spatial location, thus making the problem of localized causal interaction more difficult, I see no reason why the dualist should not affirm that the soul has a spatial location. It has the same location that its body does.

I do not wish to affirm, of course, that the dualist must accept all of the claims of the non-reductive materialist. Baker's view that it is a contingent fact that human persons are human seems wrong to me. Perhaps it is not necessary for a human being to have a human body to be human; it might suffice that a person had a human body at one time and that the person retains the capacity to be incarnated in a human body; perhaps we can go further and say that a human person cannot fully actualize his or her potential as a person without such a body. Such a view would make sense of the Christian teaching that the final hope for human persons is not disembodied existence but resurrected life.

## Footnotes

1 Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2000.

2 Cooper gives a concise summary of the arguments presented in his book on this point in his article, "Biblical Anthropology and the Soul," in *Soul, Body, and Survival*, ed. Kevin Corcoran (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2001), 222-226.

3 For a clear account of the crisis, see William Hasker, "Persons as Emergent Substances," in *Soul, Body, and Survival*, 107-111.

4 See, for example, Colin McGinn, "Can We Solve the Mind-Body Problem?" in *The Problem of Consciousness* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991), 18.

5 *Whatever Happened to the Soul: Scientific and Theological Portraits of Human Nature*, eds. Warren S. Brown, Nancey Murphy, and H. Newton Malony (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 128.

6 *Ibid.*, 143.

7 William Hasker, "Persons as Emergent Substances," in *Soul, Body, and Survival*, 112.

8 Some have denied that Aquinas is a dualist, since he views the soul as the form of the body and denies that the soul by itself is a "substance." However, it seems to me that this reflects a technical, Aristotelian sense of the term "substance," since Aquinas clearly does think that the human soul continues to exist apart from the body between death and the resurrection, and that would appear to make him some kind of dualist.

9 Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy in The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, trans. Elizabeth S. Haldane and G. R. T. Ross (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), Vol. I, 190.

10 *Ibid.*, 142.

11 *Separable Souls: A Defense of Minimal Dualism*, in *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 19, 3.

12 This is the "Constitution Theory" of Lynne Rudder Baker and Kevin Corcoran. I will say more about this view below.

13 My thanks to Douglas Geivett for posing this question and for a number of acute suggestions.

14 See Antonio R. Damasio, *Descartes' Error: Emotion Reason and the Human Brain* (New York: Avon Books, 1994). Damasio's fascinating book argues that this emotional impairment turns out to be crippling to everyday rational decision-making, thus undermining the common dichotomy between "reason" and "emotion."

15 This work is briefly discussed by Malcolm Jeeves in "Brain, Mind, and Behavior," in *Whatever*

Happened to the Soul?, 79-80.

16 Jeeves, "Brain, Mind, and Behavior," 81.

17 Ibid.

18 I understand epiphenomenalism as the view that the mind is a distinct reality from the body but that it is a causal byproduct of the body with no causal powers of its own.

19 Nancey Murphy, "Nonreductive Physicalism: Philosophical Issues," in *Whatever Happened to the Soul?*, 134.

20 Murphy, "Nonreductive Physicalism," 134-135.

21 See Murphy, "Nonreductive Physicalism," 138-139, Jeeves, "Brain, Mind, and Behavior," 89.

22 Murphy, "Nonreductive Physicalism," 131.

23 Jeeves, "Brain, Mind, and Behavior," 89.

24 Quoted in Jeeves, "Brain, Mind, and Behavior," 88. It appears the quotation is taken by Jeeves from *Essays in Honor of Roger W. Sperry*, ed. C. Trevarthen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 382-385.

25 Murphy, "Nonreductive Physicalism," 138.

26 Thanks again to Douglas Geivett for a comment leading to a clarification of this point.

27 "Materialism with a Human Face," in *Soul, Body, and Survival*, 160-161.

28 I note in passing the ethical dangers of such a view, which would appear to allow, with Peter Singer, that young human infants as well as late sufferers from Alzheimer's disease are not persons.

29 "Materialism with a Human Face," 159.

30 "Materialism with a Human Face," 160.

31 Thanks again to Douglas Geivett for suggesting that Baker might reply on these lines.

32 "Materialism with a Human Face," 159.

33 "Materialism with a Human Face," 165.

34 "Materialism with a Human Face," 168.

An explanation of what human souls experience after physical death, in the afterlife, or astral worlds. They never considered that both the bad and the good live a similar life outwardly, alike in doing good to others, attending public worship, hearing sermons and praying. They are ignorant not understanding that external deeds and external acts of worship are of no avail, only the internal state of being from which the external acts proceed is real. There is always the possibility of experiencing the true nature of mind, and pure awareness. Only then the soul can escape the realms of the afterlife. However most souls reincarnate again, as their desires and passions drive them to a new physical body. Separable Souls: Dualism, Selfhood, and the Possibility of Life after Death. C Stephen Evans. What should Christians think about the constitution of the self? When the Heidelberg Catechism says "my only comfort in life and death is that I belong, body and soul, to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ," is this language to be taken as sober metaphysics or is it merely a poetic flourish? Recently a number of Christian philosophers, theologians, and scientists have argued that the traditional (Hence, no mental life after brain death.) One more point. Later in his review Hasker argues as follows The dependence thesis nevertheless rules out any form of survival positing that we have a separable soul that could survive death. Thus I think that it misses the mark to complain that The Myth of an Afterlife doesn't dive into the mind-body problem more than it does; there are plenty of philosophy of mind textbooks that do that already, and since there is no necessity in doing so at all to make a case against personal survival, one could simply cite works. Whether such possibilities deserve consideration depends on whether one has serious reasons (not merely wishful thinking) for believing in an afterlife. And this brings me to my second main point. Is there life after death? Could I survive my death? for short to answer that question, we need to get clearer about: What exactly is it for something to be me? Dualist, of course, because there's two basic components the body and the soul. Although I may occasionally slip, I'm going to try to preserve the word "soul." When I use the word "soul," I'm going to have in mind this dualist view according to which the soul is something immaterial, nonphysical.