

# Book Review

Joel B. Green and Stuart L. Palmer, eds. *In Search of the Soul: Four Views of the Mind-Body Problem* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2005), 223 pp. \$19.82

Reviewed by Rodney L. Ford

THE MIND-BODY PROBLEM IS A MAJOR issue in the philosophy of religion. Some questions explored within this topic include the nature of the mind or soul and the body, the existence of the soul after death, moral responsibility, and religious experience. There are many variations of arguments, including property dualism, substance dualism, materialism, and physicalism.

The book titled *In Search of the Soul: Four Views of the Mind-Body Problem*, edited by Joel B. Green and Stuart L. Palmer (2005), focuses on substance dualism, a variant known as emergent dualism, non-reductive physicalism, and a variant of physicalism referred to as the constitution view of persons. This book provides a strong introduction to these four views, including the arguments supporting them and how each view addresses the critical issues in the mind-body debate.

This 215-page book is divided into six chapters. The first chapter introduces the mind-body problem, while the last chapter concludes with a focus on the implications of the mind-body problem for Christian life. The four middle chapters present arguments for the four views of the mind-body problem, each authored by a different writer. The book features a unique format where each view is presented alongside a response from each of the other three authors. All authors aim to incorporate their Christian backgrounds into their arguments.

The authors of the four viewpoints are:

- Substance Dualism: Stewart Goetz, Professor of Philosophy and Religion at Ursinus College
- Emergent Dualism: William Hasker, Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at Huntington University
- Non-reductive Physicalism: Nancy Murphy, Professor of Christian Philosophy at Fuller Theological Seminary
- Constitution View of Persons: Kevin Corcoran, Philosophy Professor at Calvin University

At the time the book was published, both editors were faculty members at Asbury Theological Seminary. Joel Green currently serves as a senior professor of

New Testament Interpretation at Fuller Theological Seminary, while Stuart Palmer works as a psychologist in Kentucky.

The book provides the reader with a table of contents, footnotes, an author index, and a subject index but does not include a bibliography.

With this background in mind, let's briefly review the four arguments discussed in the book: substance dualism, emergent dualism, non-reductive physicalism, and the constitution view of persons.

## Substance Dualism

SUBSTANCE DUALISM POSITS THAT the soul is a substance, which Goetz defines as an entity or thing, though not necessarily material. From this perspective, the mind/soul possesses essential properties that cannot be lost, including the ability to act and the capacity to be acted upon. The mind also holds psychological powers such as the ability to think about something, consider or focus on issues, and choose to act. Goetz examines the essential capacities of the mind/soul from this viewpoint, including experiencing pain or pleasure, desiring, and believing. He also discusses issues related to substance dualism, arguing that these essential powers and capacities need not be exercised continuously to exist.

Goetz is a self-described antecedent soulist, which he defines as someone for whom belief in the soul is fundamental. He bases this belief on an "introspective awareness of oneself as a soul" (43). Goetz summarizes his argument in four statements (44):

1. I (my soul) am (is) essentially a simple entity (I have no substantive parts).
2. My body is essentially a complex entity (my body has substantive parts).
3. If two entities are identical, then whatever is a property of one is also a property of the other.
4. Thus, since I possess an essential property that my body lacks, I am not identical to my body.

In building his case for this argument, Goetz effectively summarizes and engages with René Descartes and David Armstrong, who critiques Descartes' perspective.

Goetz also addresses the issue of causal interaction (the mental explanation of physical events), which is one of the critiques of substance dualism. This critique engages with arguments from neuroscience and philosophy. The examination of this critique aims to demonstrate why he believes the arguments against substance dualism from this perspective are flawed.

Unlike other books, such as William Lane Craig's *Philosophy of Religion*, which engage with the mind-body argument, The Four Views book does not employ modal logic to defend substance dualism. The only reference to modal logic occurs when Goetz critiques it for its "weak form of conceivability" (45).

## Emergent Dualism

FOR HASKER, EMERGENT DUALISM is a form of substance dualism. (Other writers who use similar arguments lean closer to property dualism.) Emergent dualism posits that the physical human brain consists of ordinary atoms and molecules, which are governed by the standard laws of physics and chemistry. However, the mind or soul emerges when specific arrangements of those atoms and molecules in the brain give rise to new laws and systems of interaction among the atoms (77). Through this arrangement and interaction, a new entity - the mind- emerges, which is not composed of atoms, molecules, or any other physical constituents. The new laws associated with this emergent mind play a crucial role in mental activities, such as rational thought and decision-making.

To demonstrate that emergence has foundations in other contexts, Hasker's argument includes examples such as the logical emergence of a fractal when the coordinates of a mathematical equation are plotted on a chart, or the causal emergent of highly organized crystals that form when certain chemicals are dissolved under the right conditions.

When considering the question of life after death, Hasker admits that substance dualism has an advantage over his viewpoint. However, he suggests that, similar to a magnetic field that continues to be held together by gravity after the magnet is removed, this provides the possibility that the emergent mind could survive death. Ultimately, he proposes that belief in the power of God can render emergent dualism viable and credible without sacrificing the doctrine of the resurrection.

## Non-Reductive Physicalism

NANCEY MURPHY DEFINES NON-REDUCTIVE PHYSICALISM (NRP) through two negations: a) the denial of dualism; and b) the denial of the supposition that physicalism lacks human meaning, responsibility, and freedom. She also suggests that her use of the term physicalism is distinct from materialism, which often carries connotations of atheism. Of course, Murphy does not deny that humans possess the capacities and powers described by Goetz in the argument for substance dualism. She accounts for these through brain functions, human social interactions, cultural factors, and God's action in our lives (116).

In explicating her view of NRP, Murphy draws from quantum physics and other sciences, arguing that the natural world is best understood as a hierarchy of levels of complexity. These levels include atoms, molecules, cells, lower-level organisms, and eventually conscious organisms. From this perspective, she believes that an immaterial mind or soul is necessary for fully understanding what a human being is (117).

The focus of this article is human moral responsibility and its compatibility with physicalism. Murphy achieves this by analyzing the cognitive abilities necessary for moral responsibility. At the top of her list of these capabilities is the ability to evaluate our own actions, which she breaks down into constituent abilities, including:

- Running behavioral scenarios
- Changing goals in light of experience
- Recognizing the feelings and likely thoughts of others
- Using sophisticated symbolic language
- Having a developed self-concept
- Having a self-representational capacity of the brain
- Representing where one is in space-time and the social order
- Having a continuous personal identity
- Using abstract concepts and syntactic competence

Murphy's argument is that these capacities make it possible for "social influences in the form of rewards and punishments" to influence reasoning, goals, and evaluate our plans (127). These factors and others contribute to human reasons for acting in morally responsible ways.

In her analysis of NRP, Murphy admits that some Biblical texts seem to suggest a different understanding of the human. However, she questions exegesis that leads to the conclusion of an immortal soul.

## Constitution View of Persons

WHILE KEVIN CORCORAN ASSERTS HIS theological convictions related to a traditional understanding of the doctrine of the resurrection, he also expresses his belief that humans lack an immaterial composition. He specifically rejects substance dualism, stating, "While I do not identify myself with an immaterial soul or a compound of soul and body, neither do I believe that I am identical with the physical object that is my biological body" (156).

The Constitution View of Persons (CVP) argues that a human person is constituted by a body but is not identical to that body. Corcoran uses several examples to clarify this concept. One of his examples is that a statue may be made of copper, but it is not identical to copper. The statue could be destroyed while the copper remains. He provides a similar example of a diploma that is made of paper but is not identical to the paper. Following these examples, he demonstrates how the human person, the statue, and the diploma possess properties that the body, the copper, or the paper lack.

Having explained what CVP is, Corcoran shifts his focus to how his view relates to the doctrine of the resurrection. Although he engages with Thomas Aquinas here, he ultimately asserts that his own exegesis concludes that death marks the end of the existence of the human person, implying that immediate survival in the presence of Christ is not resurrection but survival. His solution is what he refers to as “gappy existence.”

In a gappy existence framework, the human person ceases to exist at death but exists again at the resurrection. He describes the continuity of the pre-gap and post-gap body as God’s reassembly of the body composed of the same constituent parts. Corcoran imagines a decree from God could be something like “Let there be a resurrected body that is composed of the same parts, propertied [*sic*] and related just the same way, as the parts that composed Saint Paul’s body just before his death” (170).

In wrapping up his essay, Corcoran acknowledges two significant issues with CVP. The first is the lack of necessary and sufficient reasons for moral obligations. He simply states that dualist views face the same problem. The second issue appears to lead Corcoran to reconsider his position. In his final footnote, he admits to being personally challenged by the doctrine of the communion of saints. He indicates that this has caused him to rethink his commitment to gappy existence. Corcoran and I have exchanged initial emails regarding his current position on this, but he was unable to reply before my publication deadline.

## Conclusion

WHILE THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION ENCOMPASSES more than four perspectives on the mind-body problem, this book offers a solid introduction to these four arguments and their related issues. Each author presents an insightful description of their viewpoint, the supporting arguments, and analyses of key challenges to those arguments. Each presentation opens up opportunities for new questions to be explored and for further research to gain deeper insights into the arguments.

While the responses to each perspective are initially helpful, they become repetitive as the book progresses. Personally, I would have preferred the editors to omit the responses to each viewpoint, allowing each author to use the space to delve deeper into their own perspectives while addressing any arguments from the writers that warranted attention.

I believe this book could be a valuable resource for any course that requires an overview of these viewpoints. The book's organization of arguments and responses facilitates a variety of engaging academic assignments. However, these and other authors have also contributed extensively on these topics in academic journals. It is likely that an instructor could find additional resources that would achieve similar objectives.

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