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Analytic Theology  
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## **“How am I not Myself?”**

According to J. R. Lucas, “every rival metaphysics engenders an inability to understand the terms of its competitors.”<sup>1</sup> Given the context of the full paragraph, I take Lucas’s use of the verb ‘to engender’ not as a causal relation but as a propensity; I understand him to mean that communication between people who hold to different metaphysics is a delicate task that requires a kind of attentiveness to one’s own position that is often difficult to sustain. Our assumptions infect our thinking and become problematic when we fail to notice or acknowledge their influence over our positions. That is not to say, however, that we cannot discern and reflect upon them; such reflection is the goal and nature of philosophy. If I am wrong and Lucas is using ‘to engender’ in the stronger sense of ‘to cause,’ then his position is less coherent given that part of his argument is that, “we are able, on occasion, by the exercise of a certain sympathy [...] to penetrate behind observable behavior and put ourselves in another’s shoes and to see, to feel, to understand, what we would ourselves do if situated in his circumstance.”<sup>2</sup>

Given that the two papers being presented today were prepared by people who are persuaded by forms of process metaphysics, we have both been forced to “put ourselves in another’s shoes” as it were and see things in another frame of metaphysical thought. Instead of writing off the problems with mind/body dualisms as nonsense that have long-since been

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1. J. R. Lucas, “The Soul,” in *Faith and Logic: Oxford Essays in Philosophical Theology*, ed. Basil Mitchell, (London: Whitfriars Press, 1957), 140.
  2. *Ibid.*, 142.

resolved by process metaphysics, my goal is to get into the debate from the perspectives of our various authors (as best I can) and understand the moves they make. A quick jump to process metaphysics' solution would prematurely end an examination of our larger question, "does analytic philosophy have resources that can help in theology?"

The question at hand in these readings is how best to understand *human persons*. Are human persons *merely* bodies or are their other components as well, such as mind, will, intellect, spirit and soul? If so, how are these related? Which are constitutive, necessary, or ephemeral? What does it mean for a human to be a person? The conversation centers around the question of materialism or dualism(s).<sup>3</sup>

## **J. R. Lucas**

The bulk of Lucas's essay is concerned with refuting "Logical Behavioralism," a materialistic position that claims that the concept of the soul is simply a linguistic summation of a person's mental and emotional state. For most of the essay Lucas uses "soul" as a synonym for "spirit" and "mind." This inclusive sense, he claims, is an outcome of "the problem of Other Minds, the question whether other people are conscious beings like ourselves our merely automata." But this inclusive sense is not the only sense in which people use the term, "in other senses the contrast is between Soul and Mind; if we ask whether a particular man has still got a soul, or has lost it, we are not wondering whether he is become insane." Primarily he leaves the concept of the soul a mystery which transcends both personality and morality. Yet we know what it is not, "we approach it by, as it were, a *via negativa*, always knowing and being

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3. I will not be discussing Stump's essay since it focuses on will and intellect rather than the soul. There simply isn't enough space to adequately discuss her essay.

able to specify what it is not, always contrasting it with some other concept that we know.”<sup>4</sup>

Clearly Lucas holds to a soul/body dualism, but it is a position devoid of much content. Given that logical positivism was the default position, getting “the soul” admitted into the conversation required a radical deflation of the concept:

“What is meant by the assertion that the soul exists is that discourse about personal qualities and experiences and emotions is as legitimate and meaningful as discourse about things. [...] The doctrine that the Soul is a Substance means only this: that persons can be the subject of a discourse in which there are predicated of them attributes and qualities which cannot be properly predicated of things.”<sup>5</sup>

It seems to me that he is attempting a kind of reversal of the tactic of the behaviorists, who try to construe “the applicability of spiritual terms [as] behaviouristic criteria.” If we accept their broad definition (observable behavior is both linguistic and non-linguistic) we are given a kind of trojan horse; “When we accept it, it is interpreted in the narrower sense [observable behavior is only linguistic], in which it suggest that human beings are as inscrutable [...] as animals, and that there is no essential difference between the speech-privileged men and dumb beasts.”<sup>6</sup> By getting a very narrow definition of the soul into the discourse—making it is permissible to talk of such a thing—the possibility of a fuller discussion can come later.

## **Alvin Plantinga**

Plantinga begins with what we know best; “I being by assuming that there really is such a thing, substance, or suppositum as I, I myself. [...] We are substances.”<sup>7</sup> Plantinga is

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4. Ibid., 146-147.

5. Ibid., 134.

6. Ibid., 137.

7. Alvin Plantinga, “Materialism and Christian Belief,” in *Persons: Human and Divine*, ed. Peter Van Inwagen and Dean Zimmerman, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 102.

concerned with identifying which substance constitutes a human person. Plantinga finds materialism's notion that people are identical with their bodies problematic. Plantinga uses the question of human identity being consistent through bodily change as a cornerstone in his argument for dualism. Given that the bodies we currently have are not the bodies we were born with—every bit of matter in our bodies cycles out at some point and it is conceivable that they could be entirely replaced without us losing our identity—"it's possible that I exist when neither my body nor any of part of it exists."<sup>8</sup> Since it is possible that a person's matter can change without the person's identity changing, it is possible that something other than matter is what makes a person a person.

Given this possibility, Plantinga then turns to an impossibility; it is impossible for a material structure to be a belief. Material structures can indicate or carry information without holding to a belief (e.g. a sensor in a thermostat indicates the current temperature in the room is low and the thermostat responds to it by running the heater, but the thermostat doesn't believe that the room is too cold).<sup>9</sup> Whence does belief, then, arise? Following Leibniz, Plantinga claims that no matter how complex the arrangement of matter, such as electrons in a computer or neurons in a brain, there is no accounting for belief arising. Van Inwagen's points out is that it is just as non-obvious for non-material things as for material things to think—how can one claim that material things are not capable of thought but immaterial ones are?<sup>10</sup> Plantinga's answer is that, "a soul, a thing that thinks, [is] simple."<sup>11</sup> While there is a causal relationship between the self and the body, "To ask, 'How does the self produce

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8. Ibid., 103.

9. Ibid., 111-112.

10. Ibid., 113-116.

11. Ibid., 116.

thought?’ is to ask an improper question. There isn’t any how about it.”<sup>12</sup> Thinking is as proper for an immaterial self as having a negative charge is for an electron; “How does the unit set of Neil Armstrong manage to have exactly *him* as a member? What mysterious force, or fence, keeps Leopold out of that set? Well, it’s just the nature of sets to be like this.”<sup>13</sup> Plantinga here achieves two goals. He demonstrates the possibility of immaterial things (sets, properties, etc) being *real* while arguing that it is impossible for material things to think.

In a moment of rhetorical brilliance, Plantinga shows how the idea that ideas can’t move material things has been powerful enough “to move so many from the baseline position of dualism to materialism.”<sup>14</sup> This pun is directed at the argument that it is impossible for immaterial stuff to move (or have any causal influence at all on) material stuff, “how is this utterly insubstantial ‘thinking substance’ to have any influence on ponderous matter?”<sup>15</sup> Plantinga’s answer is that the supposed obvious answer “it can’t” is not obvious at all; to assume it is simply to beg the question in favor of materialism.<sup>16</sup> Given that dualism is a possibility and materialism is no more coherent than dualism, dualism should remain a live option—the most viable option for Christian theology.

As with Lucas, the correlation between the mind and the soul is very strong. The spirit seems to be absent from Plantinga’s framework. Given that the concept of the spirit is so strong on Christian theology, his silence on the issue seems odd.

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12. *Ibid.*, 117. The simplicity of the soul, that thinking thing, is non-obvious given that Plantinga himself is sometimes “of two minds” (115).

13. *Ibid.*, 118.

14. *Ibid.*, 120-121.

15. *Ibid.*, 129.

16. *Ibid.*

## Lynne Rudder Baker

Lynne Rudder Baker rejects the idea that Christians need to be a mind/body dualist as typified by Western thought; yet she is not a reductionistic materialist. Rejecting materialism's view that brain-states and mental-states are identical, Baker claims that mental-states, "like beliefs, desires and intentions—are rather states of the whole person—person-states, as it were, not states of any particular organ or proper part of a person."<sup>17</sup> Persons are best understood as intentional beings: "a person (human or not) is a being with a capacity for certain intentional states like believing, desiring, intending, including first-person intentional states. [...] In order to be a person, any being must have first-person intentional states."<sup>18</sup> Using the concept of intentional properties, Baker demonstrates that, "persons are constituted by bodies, but are not identical to bodies."<sup>19</sup> A statue is constituted by a chunk of marble, but that marble, even if perfectly formed, would only be a statue if the intentionality of an artist was a factor in its formation—an identical-looking chunk of marble on in a world that had never had any agents would not be a statue. A person, to be who they are, must also be embedded in their linguistic, social and historical context. Given this complex definition of personhood, the relationship between a person and her body is not one of identity. A body can be a body without being a person, but a person cannot be a person without a body; a body is necessary, but not entirely constitutive of a person. Likewise, the soul is not constitutive of a person; the soul is a state of the person, "just as a belief is not an inner state of some organ, so a soul is not

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17. Lynne Rudder Baker, "Need a Christian be a Mind/Body Dualist?," in *Oxford Readings in Philosophical Theology*, ed. Michael Rea, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009), 348.

18. *Ibid.*, 350.

19. *Ibid.*, 352.

an inner entity.”<sup>20</sup> For Baker the soul is, “that cluster of properties that makes you the person you are.”<sup>21</sup>

Baker’s theological move is to appeal to the creed and the Christian belief in the resurrection of the body—which is distinct from an eternal life as a non-embodied soul. Nothing in the creed either affirms or denies an immaterial state of the human agent and various Christian theologians have understood this differently.<sup>22</sup> Since being embodied is constitutive of being a person, we must be embodied to be ourselves in the resurrection. While denying the mind/body dualism she lifts up a nature/grace (natural/supernatural) dualism to explain redemption and the resurrection.<sup>23</sup> This move seems unnecessarily complex and fails to address her core concern that the natural world is “an integrated whole” and is suitable for natural inquiry.<sup>24</sup> One could simply appeal to our souls—our clusters of identifying properties—as being supernaturally sustained in an immaterial way by God between bodily death and the resurrection. If the resurrection does not need to be part of the natural order why should immaterial souls or minds? This is only necessary if one assumes that humans are exclusively natural beings, which, given the Christian doctrine of humankind being created in the *imago dei*, is not a given. Trading one dualism for another fails to alleviate her concerns; the first is simply subsumed into the second. With either the natural/supernatural or mind/body dualism we are left with swaths of the world which cannot be subjected to natural inquiry. However

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20. Ibid., 355.

21. Ibid. It is unclear how the mind and the soul are related given that Baker seems to indicate that the mind and soul are identical: “mind/body dualism is the thesis that human persons have non-bodily parts—immaterial souls—that can exist independently of any body”(347). I wonder if Baker is playing fast and loose with the term ‘the soul.’

22. E.g. Luther held that we simply were asleep until the resurrection. Wesley held to a view that the saints continue to participate in the world without their material bodies.

23. Ibid., 360.

24. Ibid., 362.

much her proposal moves the circumscription of the boundaries of inquiry, the final result mostly a changing of the labels.

## **Conclusion**

The concept of the soul is difficult for Christian theologians to formulate in any positive way. The reluctance of our authors to give any sort of positive, robust definition indicates the complexity of adequately dealing with the topic. Baker attempts to come up with a formulation that fits within her non-dualistic ontological commitments but at the price of not adequately taking into account the richness of the Christian doctrine of the saints. Maybe Baker's own theological background does not include the concept of asking the saints in their beatitude to intercede on our behalf and she simply neglected this doctrine because it wasn't on her radar.

Neither Lucas nor Plantinga adequately addresses the concern that I am not *just* my mind; many of my patterns of behaviors, intuitions and preferences are not mental in any strong sense of the term and yet they contribute to my identity. I would not be myself if I were not fond of Chinese tea. My knowledge of the varieties of Chinese tea is mental, but the affective response that I have to a good cup of tea is not. I am not satisfied with the strong identification of the soul with the immaterial thinking part of a person. I am wary of this tendency for philosophers to mistake the life of the mind for life *per se*.