

--from *Contemporary Debates in Philosophy of Religion*, Michael Peterson, ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2004): 341-343.

Rejoinder to Zimmerman

Dean Zimmerman defends a version of Substance Dualism—Emergent Dualism—as a view for Christians. Is there any reason—philosophical or religious—to prefer Emergent Dualism to the (nondualistic) Constitution View?

Zimmerman advises Christians to resist the trend toward holding that “dualism is not central to Christianity.” He cites (1) tradition, (2) present-day teaching of the Roman Catholic Magisterium, and (3) “exegetical principles that *ought* to generate significant biblical support for dualism.”

--With respect to (1), Christian thinking on the topic of an afterlife is rich in its variety. The tradition does not seem to speak with the single voice of substance dualism.¹

--With respect to (2), Emergent Dualism is obviously at odds with the Roman Catholic view that “the soul is immediately created by God.” The incompatibility is two-fold. According to Emergent Dualism: (i) the soul is not created by God, but is generated naturally by the brain (or body); and (ii) there is no “immediate animation” since the soul cannot emerge until there is a brain (or body) for it to emerge from.

--With respect to (3), Zimmerman does not mention which exegetical principles he has in mind, but the Bible is a compendium of testimony by various witnesses to God’s activity, and not a plausible source of philosophical theses. Many different competing philosophical theses are compatible with Christian doctrine.

So, I do not see any religious reasons to prefer Emergent Dualism to the Constitution View. Are there any philosophical reasons to prefer Emergent Dualism?

(A) According to Emergent Dualism, what is a person? Is a person identical to a soul by itself, or is it identical to a composite of the emerged soul and the brain (or body) from which it emerges?

On the one hand, if a person—you, for instance—is identical to a brain/soul (or a body/soul) composite, then you could not exist in heaven or anywhere else without the same brain (or body) that you have now. In that case, if you exist in an afterlife, your soul must be “attached” to the same brain that you had during your earthly existence. But brains (and bodies) are often destroyed—either violently at death, or by cremation, or by decay—yet one’s prospects for an afterlife are not subject to such contingencies.² Moreover, the same argument that Zimmerman mounted for the conclusion that “I am neither a brain nor a human organism nor any other thing that changes parts” (Zimmerman’s defense of Chisholm’s ‘*entia successiva*’ argument) would lead to the conclusion that I am not a brain/soul (or body/soul) composite. Brain/soul (or body/soul) composites have parts that change just as bodies alone have. So, I think that it is untenable to hold that you are identical to a brain/soul (or body/soul) composite.

On the other hand, if you are identical to a soul by itself, then, as I mentioned earlier, you did not come into existence until you already had a brain (or body) from which you (i.e., your soul) emerged. Moreover, Zimmerman says that each soul is “radically dependent upon one brain for its continued existence.” In that case, Emergent Dualism foregoes one supposed advantage of traditional dualism—namely, that souls could exist separated from any body. If there is no possibility of “separated souls,” then Emergent Dualism has no advantage over nondualistic positions like the Constitution View.

(B) According to Zimmerman, souls are “in space, presumably within the heads that generate them.” This claim is supposed to counter an objection to dualism—Why *this* soul with *this* body? Again, it seems to me that Emergent Dualism avoids an objection to traditional dualism by giving up an advantage of traditional dualism. If—as traditional dualists held—souls are not in space at all, then it is unsurprising that neither physics nor neuroscience has found any. But if—as at least some Emergent Dualists hold—souls are located in space, in our heads, then it is odd in the extreme that neither physics nor neuroscience has seen any signs of them. I think it methodologically unwise to postulate substances *in our heads* that are invisible to physics and neuroscience.

So, I see no philosophical reason to prefer Emergent Dualism to the Constitution View. I would like to conclude by commenting on Zimmerman’s criticism of ‘coincidentalism’—a view that is in some ways similar to the Constitution View.

Zimmerman defines ‘coincidentalism’ as the view that where a person is, there are two things, “one thinking, the other not,” where each is a physical object composed of microphysical particles. Note that this is not the Constitution View, according to which some animals—human and nonhuman—can reason, and therefore, can think. We human persons are constituted by human animals, to which we are not identical. But thinking is *not* what distinguishes me from my body (the human animal that constitutes me now). I am not identical to my body, because I have a first-person perspective necessarily and my body has a first-person perspective only contingently—in virtue of constituting me. Even though the Constitution View is not a version of coincidentalism, as defined by Zimmerman, some of Zimmerman’s objections to constitutionalist also apply to the Constitution View. Here are two such objections:

First, what Zimmerman finds puzzling is “how things so alike in their construction could differ so radically in their powers and potentialities.” This is puzzling

only in the context of an assumption--namely that the identity and nature of a thing are determined by its construction. This is clearly a question-begging assumption.

I explicitly hold the following two views: (a) What a thing most fundamentally is is often determined by what it can do—its causal powers, its functions, the roles that it places—rather than by what it is made of. (b) The properties that are essential to something may be intentional, where intentional properties entail that there are people with beliefs and desires. (Both (a) and (b) seem obvious in the case of artifacts.) In the context of (a) and (b)—as opposed to the question-begging assumption—there is nothing at all puzzling about “how things so alike in their construction could differ so radically in their powers and potentialities.” A non-question-begging argument should refute (a) and/or (b)—not just presuppose that they are false.

Second, Zimmerman says of the coincidentalists that “it is unclear how the one [an organism] can be thinking and the other not [the matter in my body], given their structural similarity.” Zimmerman’s objection seems to be aimed at either (i) the view that my body thinks, but the mass of matter making it up does not, or (ii) the view that I think, but my body does not. Since I hold neither (i) nor (ii), no argument against either (i) or (ii) is an argument against the Constitution View. Moreover, as (a) and (b) suggest, structurally similar things may differ in kind if they have different causal powers or different functions.

So, I still see no reason—religious or philosophical—for a Christian to prefer substance dualism (even in its Emergent Dualist version) to the Constitution View. Hence, a Christian still should not be a mind/body dualist.

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¹ See Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200 – 1336* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), and Jeffrey Burton Russell, *A History of Heaven: The Singing Silence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

² See Peter van Inwagen, “The Possibility of Resurrection,” in *Immortality*, Paul Edwards, ed. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1992): 242-6. Reprinted from the *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 9 (1978); Dean Zimmerman, “The Compatibility of Materialism and Survival: The ‘Falling Elevator’ Model, *Faith and Philosophy* 16 (1999): 194-212.