

# *Human Nature in Theistic and Evolutionary Perspectives*

with Michael L. Spezio, “Social Neuroscience and Theistic Evolution: Intersubjectivity, Love, and the Social Sphere”; David Fergusson, “Humans Created According to the Imago Dei: An Alternative Proposal”; Thomas F. Tracy, “Divine Purpose and Evolutionary Processes”; Thomas Jay Oord, “The Divine Spirit as Causal and Personal”; and John W. Cooper, “Created for Everlasting Life: Can Theistic Evolution Provide an Adequate Christian Account of Human Nature?”

## CREATED FOR EVERLASTING LIFE: CAN THEISTIC EVOLUTION PROVIDE AN ADEQUATE CHRISTIAN ACCOUNT OF HUMAN NATURE?

by John W. Cooper

*Abstract.* Christians who affirm standard science and the biblical doctrine of creation often endorse *theistic evolution* as the best approach to human origins. But *theistic evolution* is ambiguous. Some versions are *naturalistic* (NTE)—God created humans entirely by evolution—and some are *supernaturalistic* (STE)—God supernaturally augmented evolution. This article claims that NTE is inadequate as an account of human origins because its theological naturalism and emergent physicalist ontology of the soul or person conflict with the Christian doctrine that God created humans for everlasting life. Both the traditional Christian account of the afterlife and its modern Christian alternatives involve God’s supernatural action and a separation (dualism) of person and body at death. STE can combine with several philosophical accounts of the body-soul relation to provide an adequate Christian account of original human nature.

*Keywords:* dualism; emergentism; materialism; monism; person; physicalism; soul; supernaturalism; theistic evolution; theistic naturalism

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### OVERVIEW

Christians who affirm the biblical doctrine of creation and the standard scientific account of human origins often endorse *theistic evolution* as the most coherent synthesis—the golden mean between recent creation and

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atheistic evolution. They believe that the God of the Bible used the data, events, and processes studied by genetics, evolutionary biology, and paleoanthropology to create humans with the unique capacities that image God. They regard the choice between biblical Christianity and world-class science as a false dilemma.

But *theistic evolution* (also called *evolutionary creation*) is a broad position that includes both naturalistic and supernaturalistic versions. Some advocates of theistic evolution do not address this ambiguity, while others acknowledge it without taking a clear or consistent position (Collins 2006, 199–200, Sec. 4, 6; BioLogos Foundation 2012, 6, 9, 10). But this lack of precision is theologically and philosophically problematic, and it raises significant questions about the consistency of theistic evolution with the message of the biblical narrative as a whole.

The primary problem is that unless supernaturalism is explicitly affirmed, theistic evolution will most likely be understood as theological naturalism. The reason is the widespread presumption that science involves metaphysical as well as methodological naturalism. Science must assume *methodological* or *operative naturalism*—the uniformity of nature and the universality of the laws that govern it. Methodological naturalism allows that if supernatural or immaterial forces do affect nature, science simply cannot explain them. But science need not assume and cannot conclude that everything in the universe is physical and governed entirely by natural laws. Nevertheless, the more widely held view is that science also supports and requires *metaphysical naturalism*. Given current cosmology, moreover, metaphysical naturalism amounts to *emergent physicalism* or *materialism*—the view that everything in the universe has resulted from the physical energy of the Big Bang (Stoljar 2009). There are no immaterial forces or supernatural events in nature. This definition of naturalism does not imply atheism. It entails only that if there is a God who acts in the world, he does so entirely within and according to the order of nature. This view of divine action is *theological* or *theistic naturalism* (Peacocke 2007, ch. 3). Because metaphysical naturalism is so widely associated with modern science and has major implications for theology, Christians who affirm theistic evolution should indicate whether they are supernaturalists or naturalists.

Generic theistic evolution is problematic with respect to human nature as well. Naturalistic theistic evolution (NTE) holds that God generated the souls, minds, and spirits of his human image bearers entirely from the primordial physical forces of the Big Bang. Thus, NTE assumes or implies *emergent physicalism* or *emergent materialism* as its metaphysics of the human person, soul, or mind (Clayton 2004, ch. 4; Peacocke 2007, ch. 2). The mental, moral, and spiritual states, properties, capacities, and actions of humans have been generated entirely from physical energy and matter through the evolution of the human body and brain.

Supernatural theistic evolution (STE) holds that God acted supernaturally as well as through natural processes to transform hominids into image-bearing humans (Collins 2006, 202, 207; Haarsma and Haarsma 2011, 239–41; John Paul II 1996). Some kinds of STE hold that God did so by adding an immaterial component—a soul or spirit, but others do not. Several metaphysical theories of the soul or person are consistent with STE.

#### SUMMARY OF THE ARGUMENT

Christian Scripture teaches that God created humans for everlasting life and communion with him, and that God actualizes this destiny through death and bodily resurrection. NTE cannot account for this view of human nature, its fulfillment, or, by implication, its origination. Virtually all branches of historic Christianity confess that Scripture teaches a two-stage transition after death: personal existence beyond earthly embodiment and future bodily resurrection. Contemporary Christian alternatives propose either an immediate resurrection or nonexistence between death and future resurrection. Obviously, all Christian views of the afterlife, traditional and contemporary, require supernatural divine action to account for resurrection. All likewise affirm that persons (souls) exist beyond the decease of their earthly bodies, a claim that entails an ontological dichotomy or body-soul dualism of some sort. Given God's original intention to actualize this destiny, it follows that supernatural action was involved in human creation and that immortality and dualism were at least implicitly potential in original human nature. But NTE precludes all three. Thus, theistic evolution must be supernaturalistic (STE) to reflect the cumulative teaching of Scripture about human destiny. Several metaphysical understandings of the human constitution are viable candidates for this perspective.

#### FROM LIFE THROUGH DEATH TO EVERLASTING LIFE: GOD AND HUMANITY IN THE BIBLICAL NARRATIVE

The biblical narrative from Genesis to Revelation is the history of God's relationship with humanity. It begins with God's creation of heaven and earth—his kingdom—culminating with humans as his image bearers and vice regents, and it climaxes with bodily resurrection and everlasting life with God in the new heaven and earth—his eternal kingdom (Bartholomew and Goheen 2004). Whatever God's purposes for sin and death, he intended everlasting life through Jesus Christ for humanity from the beginning. According to Ephesians 1:3–14, God chose us before the foundation of the world for eternal life through the life, death, resurrection, and headship of Christ over all things—all for the glory of God. Similarly, Colossians 1:15–20 envisions the creation of all things and their

reconciliation to God through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In John's Gospel, the creative Word of God is the source of human life, which is transformed into everlasting life by the love of God in Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, through supernatural regeneration by God's Spirit (John 1:1–4, 3:3–16, 6:40). Throughout Scripture, a single divine plan and goal is to unify history as it progresses from creation, sin, and death, through salvation in Jesus Christ, to everlasting fellowship with God in the life to come. Christian accounts of human origin should be framed by the entire biblical narrative and fully embrace the implications of our destiny.

THE CHRISTIAN DEBATE ABOUT SUPERNATURALISM,  
NATURALISM, AND HUMAN ORIGIN

The distinction between supernatural and natural divine action is not made in Scripture but unavoidably arises from experience. The God of the Bible is wholly other than creation and yet all-powerfully present and active in every dimension and part of it. God created and sustains the universe, commands the sun, wind, and rain, rules the nations, and restores the dead to life—all with the same sovereign power. The natural-supernatural distinction emerges only when humans reflect on God's actions in terms of the regularities and limits of the universe that we experience. Most of God's mighty deeds in Scripture operate within the order of nature that he created and sustains. Even some biblical miracles are naturally possible: Perhaps, God ignited Elijah's altar with lightning or coordinated the trajectories of the fish and the disciples' net. But turning water into wine and raising the dead are naturally impossible. Common sense does not need science to draw a clear distinction between natural and supernatural divine acts.

Natural divine actions involve and achieve only what is possible given the powers, laws, and current states of affairs in the universe. God determines, guides, and/or allows events to occur within the possibilities inherent in the natural order. Supernatural divine actions introduce nonnatural factors into the order and dynamics of the universe to bring about results that are not naturally possible. God can exert supernatural power directly within nature or endow nature with ingredients, structures, powers, and/or characteristics that it did not contain.

The Bible and historic Christian theology are emphatically and seamlessly both supernaturalist and naturalist. They affirm the supernatural miracles of Scripture and the possibility of extrabiblical supernatural miracles without denying God's omnipresence and providence in the natural order, without compromising the regularity of nature required by science, and without positing a "God of the gaps" to correct deficiencies or bridge alleged discontinuities in nature. (Most versions of classical supernaturalism do not generate these problems any more than most kinds of theistic naturalism entail impersonal deism.)

Since the seventeenth century, thoughtful Christians have disagreed about the extent to which the naturalistic assumption of modern science should be accommodated or canonized in philosophy, theology, and biblical scholarship (Brown 1984; Haarsma and Haarsma 2011, 49–50, 189; Van Till 2008). Traditional Christians continue to affirm supernaturalism in creation, providence, redemptive history—especially in the incarnation, miracles, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ—and in the life of the church. Modernist Christians tend to be consistent naturalists in creation, providence, and history, including God’s presence in Jesus and the church, and to reserve the supernatural for God’s transcendence and the life to come (Peacocke 2007). A mediating position affirms the redemptive miracles reported in Scripture but not in creation, providence, or extrabiblical history.

The disagreement over supernaturalism surfaces in the debate about creation and evolution as the issue of *interventionism* or *noninterventionism* (Haarsma and Haarsma 2011, ch. 8). The question is whether God created the different kinds of things by supernatural miracles (interventions), natural processes, or both. (*Intervention* does not imply that God is otherwise absent or inactive in natural processes.) Recent creationists believe that God made all kinds of creatures directly and supernaturally a few millennia ago, and that sound science supports this reading of Genesis. Progressive creationists, as well as many proponents of intelligent design, accept the standard scientific dating of the universe but hold that God specially created new kinds of beings, including humans, in different epochs or stages of natural history. Some allow that God used evolution within specially created kingdoms, phyla, or genera. Among theistic evolutionists, supernaturalists (STE) hold that evolution accounts for all living things but only partially for humans, who were specially created from hominids. Naturalists (NTE) hold that God created all living things, including humans, entirely by evolution. Of all these Christian views of origins, only NTE denies supernatural divine action entirely.

#### HUMAN ORIGINS AND THE CHRISTIAN DEBATE ABOUT THE BODY-SOUL RELATION

Closely linked to the origin of humanity is the relation of body and soul (in this article, *soul* is roughly synonymous with or includes *mind*, *person*, *ego*, and *self*). Beliefs about the origin of the soul and its fate after death have been part of religion since ancient times (Eliade 1977, ch. IV). Philosophical reflection on the nature and relation of body and soul predates Socrates and was continued by early Jewish and Christian theologians, such as Philo, Justin Martyr, Origen, Tertullian, and Augustine. The vast majority of the Christian tradition have understood Scripture to teach that

God created humans by animating a physical body with a spiritual soul. In other words, the traditional doctrine of human creation is supernaturalist concerning God's action and dualist in its anthropology. The current generation of Anglo-American Christian scholars has thoroughly reexamined and debated the body-soul relation to determine which metaphysical theory best fits Scripture, philosophy, and current science, including evolution (Cooper 1989; Hasker 1995<sup>1</sup>; Brown, Murphy, and Maloney 1998; Corcoran 2001; Green and Palmer 2005)<sup>2</sup>.

The primary philosophical question about body and soul is the unity and duality of human nature in this life: We are both physical-biological and mental-spiritual beings, but do we consist of one basic ingredient or two? The other question, that of the afterlife—whether and in what way personal survival of death is possible—is considered in the next section.

The unity of human nature seems obvious but is puzzling on reflection. *Prima facie* we are single, integral beings possessing seamlessly interrelated bodily, mental, and spiritual capacities. But on analysis, our physical-bodily and mental-spiritual states and functions are so different that they can only be correlated, not explained by each other or by a common denominator. Thus, a basic mental-physical duality presents itself. The conundrum is set: Metaphysically, do humans consist of one basic ingredient or a combination of two? *Dualists* posit two kinds of ingredient (spiritual and physical) or two entities (soul or mind and body) in composite unity. *Monists* posit one ingredient but differ widely on whether it is physical, mental-spiritual, or neither. A brief survey of these positions follows.

Philosophers have proposed different kinds of dualism (Goetz and Taliaferro 2011; Robinson 2011). *Substance dualism* holds that humans are a compound unity of two things, a material body and an immaterial soul. Plato, Augustine, Descartes, Alvin Plantinga, and Richard Swinburne hold this view. Other dualisms do not posit two substances or entities. Thomas Aquinas argued for a duality of ingredients that co-constitute one thing—a monism of two irreducible principles, soul and matter. A human is a single substance—a rational-spiritual animal—formed by an immaterial soul that organizes matter to be a living body. The human soul is bodily but not material. This position remains the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church and is currently held by Catholic (Stump 1995) and Protestant philosophers (Moreland and Rae 2000). Some dualists extend Thomas' position to hold that human souls are essentially bodily but not essentially physical or fleshly (Schärtl 2010). *Emergent dualism* is a recent proposal that is closer to monism (Hasker 1999). It affirms that soul and body are ontologically distinct structures and centers of activity that are integrated and interactive. But it agrees with materialism that the soul is generated by and emerges from the physical organism as the individual develops from conception. There are other kinds of dualism as well.

Monism includes three general kinds: physicalism or materialism; personalism, spiritualism, and idealism; and neutral or psychophysical monism.

*Materialism* or *physicalism* asserts that humans are material beings and the soul is constituted or generated by the physical energy of the body operating according to the laws of physics and biology. *Reductive materialism* claims that mental-spiritual phenomena—such as persons and experiences, thoughts, feelings, and values—are states, functions, or properties of brains. Most Christian materialists prefer *nonreductive physicalism* (Murphy 2006). Although we are entirely physical beings, our mental and spiritual states and capacities cannot be reduced to or explained by physics and biology, and they can exercise causality on our bodies. Similarly, *emergent monism* begins as physicalism but moves beyond it metaphysically. Humans possess ontologically new and irreducible levels of consciousness, intellect, and spirit that have been generated as more complex systems and entities evolved from the physical energy of the Big Bang (Peacocke 2007, ch. 2; Clayton 2004, ch. 4).

Opposite materialist monism are views which hold that humans are essentially immaterial beings—persons, souls, spirits, or minds—whose bodies are manifestations or effects of their presence in the dimensions of space, time, and physical energy. Textbooks often label this view *idealism*, which suggests that we are primarily minds or intellects. Plotinus, George Berkeley, Francis Bradley, and Josiah Royce were idealists. But *personalism* and *spiritualism* have other connotations about the essence of human nature. Immaterial monism is currently unpopular in Western philosophy but remains standard in most Hindu and Buddhist thought (Wallace 2007).

A third general kind, *neutral, dual-aspect*, or *psychophysical monism*, affirms that humans are constituted of a basic substance or energy that is neither exclusively mental nor physical but that generates or manifests itself as both. Baruch Spinoza, William James, Teilhard de Chardin, and Alfred North Whitehead hold different versions. If the primal stuff is structured one way, it has physical functions and characteristics. If it takes another form, it is mental. Complex beings, such as humans, are both mental and physical (Griffin 2000).

All of these dualist and monist theories have obvious correlations with the origin of humanity. Whatever it may be, the metaphysics of human nature was actualized or instantiated in human origination. If we evolved from stardust with or without God's supervision, then emergent physicalism is correct. If God made us of immaterial and material components, then dualism is true. If God created us from neutral primordial stuff, then psychophysical or dual-aspect monism is the right idea. Our genesis and metaphysical constitution cannot be separated. We return to this connection in more detail after considering Christian views of human destiny.

HUMAN DESTINY AND THE BODY-SOUL RELATION: DUALIST  
VIEWS

Our destiny is likewise inseparable from our metaphysical constitution (Hasker 2012). The distinction between body and soul was originally religious and focused primarily on death and the afterlife. Thus, the Bible's teaching about the life to come is a second crucial issue in the current Christian dualism-monism debate.

Historically, the virtual consensus of the Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and confessional Protestant traditions is that Scripture teaches a two-stage view (Ratzinger 1988; Cooper 1989). Death is followed by an intermediate period of conscious discarnate existence with Christ or apart from him until bodily resurrection, final judgment, and eternal life or perdition. This transition obviously requires God's supernatural action and some sort of soul-body dualism. But a number of current Christian scholars disagree with the traditional view and the dualism it entails (Schwarz 2000, ch. 3). Instead, they propose versions of bodily resurrection intended to avoid dualism. We consider dualism first and then the monist alternatives. (I do not consider an immediate transition to a final spiritual existence as proposed by some modern Christians because it omits bodily resurrection and echoes the disembodied immortal soul eschatology of Socrates and Plato.)

In discussions of death and the afterlife, *dualism* does not refer to a specific philosophical theory of the components of human nature. Instead, it is the common sense, nontheoretical worldview belief that souls (spirits, minds, and persons) are sufficiently distinct from their bodies that they can exist without them, perhaps only by supernatural divine action. Preliterate animists can be dualists in this sense. This difference in the meaning of *dualism* is often overlooked by academics who suppose that Scripture has nothing to say about monism and dualism unless it teaches philosophical positions. The Bible does not contain philosophical concepts of body and soul. But the inference of dualism does not require a theory of body and soul or a metaphysical explanation of their separation. It merely requires the teaching of Scripture that persons survive death.

Philosophically, the classical Christian two-stage doctrine does not necessarily require substance dualism. Of course, if souls are immortal spiritual substances, then God's providence is sufficient to keep them in existence after death. But the soul need not be a complete substance, or functionally independent of the body, or naturally immortal for God to sustain it disembodied. It need only be *subsistent*—a sufficiently distinct structure, functional organization, dimension, or part of the embodied person—so that separate existence is metaphysically possible even if it is not naturally possible. An omnipotent God can bring about supernaturally what is naturally impossible, such as turning water into wine, raising the dead, and



keeping a brain or a person functioning apart from his/her body. But even an omnipotent God cannot do what is metaphysically or logically impossible, such as ceasing to exist, doing evil, making round squares, or turning water into wine without carbon. Accordingly, if souls are metaphysically identical with brain functions or their effects, then even God cannot make them exist without brains.

Several kinds of philosophical dualism support traditional Christian eschatology (Cooper 1989, 215–30). Obviously, substance dualism can envision a disembodied soul, especially if souls are naturally immortal, as Augustine held. But if the soul is a distinct but possibly mortal substance, as Descartes allowed, it can still be sustained by God supernaturally. Aquinas' dual-constituent (soul-matter) monism also qualifies. For Aquinas as for Aristotle, the soul is not a substance (entity, being) and does not naturally exist disembodied. But like Plato, Thomas holds that the soul is naturally simple and immortal, which means that it is subsistent and able to exist disembodied—less than fully human (Aquinas 1948, I.Q.75, 76). Some go beyond Thomas and hold that humans are essentially bodily beings in this life, between death and resurrection, and in the final resurrection but are not always material or fleshly bodies (Schärtl 2010). Other modes of embodiment are possible. Emergent dualism holds that the physical organism generates an ontologically distinct soul or person. Although not naturally separable or immortal, God can supernaturally sustain it apart from its natural base in the brain (Hasker 2005, 81–83). All these kinds of dualism support the traditional view of the afterlife.

Oxymoronically, some kinds of philosophical monism are sufficiently dualistic in the relevant sense to allow for a two-stage afterlife by God's supernatural action. For example, neutral or dual-aspect monism can regard body and soul as naturally inseparable but structurally distinct enough for postphysical personal existence to be possible (Teilhard de Chardin 1959, ch. 3.3). God could contract the psychophysical person into a merely spiritual state at death and expand her into psychophysical reembodiment thereafter. Surprisingly, at least one version of materialism could be dualist in the requisite sense. Constitutive materialism holds that persons are constituted by their bodies but not identical with them. This view hypothesizes that at death, God could dichotomize the body into a person body and a corpse by something analogous to atomic fission. Humans are essentially bodily beings in life, during an intermediate state, and after the resurrection (Corcoran 1998). Finally, spiritualism, idealism, and personalism, which regard the body as a manifestation or effect of the soul in the physical universe, are kinds of monism that can account for two-stage eschatology. The soul continues to exist beyond the material universe after death, and resurrection is its manifestation in the dimensions and elements of the new creation.

All of these dualistic and monistic philosophies of human nature are dualist in the generic sense relevant to life after death, and all require the supernatural action of God to account for the traditional Christian view.

#### HUMAN DESTINY AND THE BODY-SOUL RELATION: MONIST VIEWS

Like dualism, *monism* has a commonsense, nonphilosophical meaning in connection with death and the life to come. It refers to any view for which disembodied personal existence is impossible because body and soul cannot be separated. Like dualism, it is exemplified by several philosophical positions. For some, the soul is inseparable because of its metaphysical relation to the body and brain. For others, even if the soul were ontologically distinct, it could not exist separately because God does not act supernaturally to sustain it.

Body-soul monism allows three afterlife scenarios. The first precludes any postmortem personal existence whatsoever and is therefore untenable for Christians. It combines monism with consistent theistic naturalism: Humans are mortal, body and soul are inseparable, and God does not act supernaturally. Therefore, human existence is temporary. *Eternal life* is a euphemism for the place of each temporal life in God's eternity.

The other two monistic options affirm the resurrection of the entire psychophysical person. One posits an immediate resurrection (Hick 1994, ch. 15; Pannenberg 1970). At the moment of death, God grants each person resurrection embodiment. The other option is nonexistence (except in God's memory) between death and future resurrection (Polkinghorne 1994, ch. 9; Murphy 2006, 28–30). At death, we cease to exist until God raises us bodily at the future general resurrection. Both proposals require the supernatural miracle of resurrection, but they do avoid an interval of disembodied existence.

Before relating Christian eschatology to the creation of humans, I wish to note that these monist alternatives are significantly more problematic than the traditional dualistic view, both biblically and philosophically.

Biblically, for much of the twentieth century, antidualist scholars have attempted to reinterpret the relevant texts and challenge the traditional two-stage doctrine. Nevertheless, the most thorough and comprehensive biblical scholarship still supports the sequence of discarnate or disembodied existence followed by bodily resurrection—not one or the other—as the cumulative teaching of Scripture as a whole (Wright 2003).<sup>3</sup> In brief, the Old Testament envisions ghostly subsistence in the underworld, *Sheol* (*Hades*), followed by future bodily resurrection on the apocalyptic Day of the Lord. Second Temple Judaism developed several eschatologies, including the Pharisees' doctrine that the souls or spirits of the dead currently await future bodily resurrection. Paul explicitly affirms the two-stage view

of the Pharisees (Acts 23:6–9), which is key to reading his epistles. Some New Testament texts envision immediate presence with God or Christ after death (e.g., Luke 16:19–31, 23:43; 1 Philippians 1:23–24; 2 Corinthians 5:1–10). Others promise future resurrection (1 Thessalonians 4:14–18; 1 Corinthians 15:51–52). Some include both (e.g., John 11:23–25; Revelation 6:9–11, 7:9–17, and 20:4–6). The two-stage view is the only eschatological scenario with which all the relevant texts are consistent (Ratzinger 1988; Cooper 1989; Wright 2011). Given the church's long-held canonical reading of Scripture as a whole, as well as current biblical scholarship, it is much easier to argue that Christians are no longer obligated to believe this eschatology, like an anachronistic cosmology, than to deny that it is the teaching of the New Testament.

Philosophically, both monist alternatives have difficulty guaranteeing personal identity. Whether resurrection is immediate or future, the monists' criterion for personal identity must be a set of characteristics—a unique personal-bodily profile or description—because there is no continuously existing entity—a soul or a body—in which personal identity inheres (Hick 1994). Thus John Doe is the person who looks, acts, and self-identifies as John Doe in this life and the life to come. The weakness of this notion of identity is evident in the possibility that multiple resurrected individuals could look, act, and claim to be John Doe with equal sincerity and validity. All would be exactly similar, so there is no way to determine the real John Doe, if there is one. It is equally likely that all are sincerely mistaken replicas. The problem for this view is that personal identity, rightly understood, is absolutely singular. It is logically impossible that there be two of a person. But the monist criterion of personal identity does not entail absolute singularity. It equates numerical identity with exact similarity, whereas different things can be exactly similar. Monists rightly claim that personal identity is possible on their account, and they rightly trust God not to resurrect multiple John Does. But multiple Does are possible. This thought-experiment exposes the problematic status of personal identity in the monist explanations. A number of ingenious solutions have been proposed, but none can match the indubitable self-identity of the dualists' continuously existing soul (Gasser 2010).<sup>4</sup>

Another philosophical problem with the monistic views is that they do not finally avoid dualism—personal existence apart from one's earthly body. If resurrection is immediate, then persons exist in resurrection bodies totally distinct from their corpses. Either one self-identical person switches bodies, which entails dualism, or else there are two different persons because persons are essentially connected to particular bodies. Future resurrection is similarly problematic (Murphy 2006, 137–42). If persons are essentially connected to particular bodies, as monism entails, and resurrection bodies are not the very same entities as earthly bodies, then either we have two different persons or self-identical persons exist apart from their earthly bodies,

which entails dualism. Monists can avoid an interval of disembodiment, but they cannot avoid a person-body dichotomy without calling personal identity into question.

In sum, generic body-soul dualism is a sounder biblical and philosophical framework for Christian eschatology than generic monism. Since human destiny fulfills the same human nature that God created, sufficient dualism should be affirmed of the original human constitution. Supernatural action is necessary for all Christian views of life after death, dualist and monist alike, because resurrection and immortality are not possible naturally, and because consistent theistic naturalism precludes postmortem personal existence entirely.

#### POTENTIAL IMMORTALITY, SUPERNATURALISM, DUALISM, AND ORIGINAL HUMAN NATURE

Given the biblical narrative as a whole, Christian accounts of the creation of humans must affirm possible supernatural action, the potential immortality of original human nature, and metaphysical body-soul duality sufficient to allow for a two-stage transition to everlasting life. The reasons for these affirmations are as follows.

Possible supernaturalism is necessary because God's essential nature and ability to act in creation do not change. If God ever acts supernaturally, then he is always able to act supernaturally. His original act of creation *ex nihilo* is supernatural by definition, as are the incarnation and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the realization of everlasting life for humans. Therefore, God was able to act supernaturally when he created humans. A metaphysical reason for thinking that he did act supernaturally in creating humans is considered below. (In addition, there is good reason to conclude that Genesis 1 and 2 both teach God's supernatural creation of humans, but this paper does not rely on it.)

Immortality or everlasting life must have been potential for human nature as created because that was God's intention from the beginning (Romans 8:29; Ephesians 1:4–7). God did not originally create humans to die like animals and then at some point decide to add eternal life. Thus, the actual trajectory from creation through sin and death to everlasting life was ordained by God and must have been metaphysically possible for original human nature by God's action.

The narrative of the creation and fall of our first parents in Genesis 2 and 3 has elicited more than one account of how God actualized human immortality. God might have created our first parents with immortality conditional on their obedience, as Augustine and most of the Christian tradition hold. If they remained obedient, by God's Spirit, eventually they would have become unable to sin and die. But they lost eternal life by sinning and were granted it again through spiritual union with the

resurrected Jesus Christ. A second possibility is that humans were created mortal but could have gained everlasting life by remaining faithful to God. By perpetual obedience, they would access the tree of life and become immortal. But they sinned and lost the opportunity until it was restored through Jesus Christ. A third option is that God created humans mortal and always intended us to pass from life, through death, to immortality and everlasting life through Jesus Christ (Barr 1993). All these scenarios recognize that God created humans with the potential for immortality. Perhaps, there are others as well.

In addition to potential immortality, body-soul dualism sufficient for the transition to everlasting life must be implicit in original human nature. God could have preserved monism by immortalizing humans as psychophysical unities. He could have done so by granting everlasting earthly life or by transitioning us to the next life without death, as with Enoch and Elijah. But instead God authorized death, continuation of personal existence after the demise of the earthly body, and final resurrection. *What is actual must be possible* is a basic principle of metaphysics and logic. If a body-soul dichotomy actually occurs, then a body-soul dichotomy was metaphysically possible for humans as created by God, whether or not the separation is natural and good. The continuity between our created and glorified nature is logical and metaphysical. The transition to everlasting life cannot change our essential nature or otherwise we would no longer be human in the life to come. Thus, original human nature must have been constituted dualistically in the generic sense relevant to life everlasting.

#### HUMAN ORIGIN AND CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHIES OF HUMAN NATURE

This article has argued that NTE is not adequate as a Christian perspective on human origin because it is inconsistent with Scripture's personal eschatology—everlasting life with God. NTE assumes a physicalist or emergent monist view of the soul or person, which is metaphysically incompatible with the Bible's two-stage view of the afterlife, and which undermines personal identity in the alternative one-stage resurrection views that it proposes. In addition, if NTE's naturalism is an enduring principle, then it precludes the supernatural action of God that all Christian views of the afterlife require. For these reasons, Christian theistic evolutionary accounts of human origination should be supernaturalistic (STE) and acknowledge the ontological distinctness of soul or person and body.

STE is not tied to a single metaphysics of the human constitution, such as substance dualism, but is compatible with a range of philosophical views of body and soul. Only emergent physicalism and materialism are problematic. Consider some options available for Christian views of human evolution.

Both versions of classical Christian dualism, Augustinian and Thomist, are compatible with human evolution. For Augustine, souls and bodies are distinct substances conjoined. To accommodate evolution, an Augustinian could hold that God supernaturally infused a human soul into a hominid's body to create the first human. For Aquinas, souls and matter are distinct metaphysical principles or ingredients that co-constitute single beings. A Thomist could propose that God supernaturally transformed a hominid entirely—body and soul—by infusing it with a human soul (John Paul II 1996). Both versions affirm that humans were created with potential for everlasting life, whether or not they sinned and died.

Further modifications of traditional Christian dualism are possible. Suppose that God did not originally create the soul as a distinct, immortal substance but made it evolve naturally from the body and dependent on it, as emergent dualism proposes. The soul is nonetheless sufficiently ontologically distinct for God to sustain it disembodied. Suppose further that physical death is natural and was God's original preference for transitioning humans from this life to everlasting life. Even with these significant modifications, philosophical dualism is more than adequate for a Christian understanding of the destiny and origin of humanity.

Other metaphysical views of the original human constitution also qualify. Consider the family of spiritualist, idealist, and personalist monisms. The evolution of hominids to humans can be conceived as the progressive spatial-temporal-physical instantiation of hominid kinds culminating in individual human souls that God supernaturally creates. For humans, bodily existence is natural, enduring immaterial personal existence is possible, and bodily resurrection is necessary to fulfill human nature. This sequence fits the biblical narrative.

Even some neutral and psychophysical monisms are viable, provided that supernaturalism is also affirmed. God could have created humans as substantially whole physical-spiritual beings whose souls are sufficiently distinct that they are supernaturally separable from their bodies. God could have done so by supernaturally combining created ingredients or powers (perhaps represented as *earth* and *spirit* in Genesis 2:7) in the process of human evolution, or by authorizing a process of cosmic evolution that eventually differentiated human persons and organisms from originally undifferentiated primordial energy. Note that in these cases, the evolution of the soul would be theistically *natural* (implicit in the natural order), but they would not be instances of NTE because the primordial energy is not merely physical. If spirit is present potentially in primordial energy, and God gradually actualized it through natural cosmic evolution, then primordial energy cannot be merely physical but implicitly must be both physical and spiritual, as William James, Teilhard de Chardin, and Alfred North Whitehead claimed. This is the principle of sufficient reason.

But suppose that the Big Bang was merely physical, as assumed by physicalism, materialism, and emergent monism. In that case, God's use of cosmic evolution would have generated successively the new and irreducible mental-spiritual functions and capacities of human nature. Evolution would be *ontological* and not merely biological (Clayton 2004; Peacocke 2007). In that case, it could be true that persons are generated by our bodies but not reducible to them (Murphy 2005), or we are constituted by our bodies but are not identical to them and are separable from them (Corcoran 1998). If these claims are true, would they not provide an emergent physicalist or materialist NTE account of human origination that is adequate for eschatology, contrary to the thesis of this article?

No. Theological naturalism is not sufficient to account for the emergence of a separable person or soul. Recall that the soul must at least be metaphysically distinct from the body, even if it is not naturally separable or functionally independent. Emergence must yield metaphysical dualism. Standard emergentism is physical monism. It maintains that humans are physical entities that have emergent and irreducible mental-spiritual capacities and properties that operate according to emergent and irreducible laws (O'Connor and Wong 2012). These capacities and properties are not metaphysically separable, even supernaturally. (Corcoran's view of person-corpus separation requires a supernatural act altering human nature at the moment of death (Corcoran 1998)).

Emergentism as a general ontology is debatable, challenged by materialists and dualists alike (O'Connor and Wong 2012). Given current experimental science and the metaphysical principle that any effect must have a cause sufficient to bring it about, there is insufficient reason to affirm it. There is no compelling empirical evidence for it. We do not and cannot observe ontological emergence of mind from physical organisms—brains constructing thoughts from ideas or feeling uncertain about their truth. Much less can we explain the process by which anything merely physical or biological could produce the laws and properties or the experience of color, logical necessity, moral obligation, and holiness. Ontological emergence is not an observation or a scientific conclusion but a philosophical hypothesis that must be affirmed if one holds that the current universe emerged naturalistically from a purely physical beginning. Even if plausible, it begs the question of ontological emergence, lacks direct evidence, and runs against the principle of sufficient cause. (Is any metaphysical hypothesis entirely free of inadequacies and objections?) Emergent dualism is likewise open to these objections, given that it shares the physicalistic starting point and novelty-creating dynamic of emergent monism. More significantly, however, emergent monism does not posit a metaphysical body-soul distinction sufficient for Christian eschatology, whereas emergent dualism does.

Given all we know, therefore, it is reasonable to think that God himself could not have evolved the current universe naturalistically from a purely

physical Big Bang any more than Jesus could have raised Lazarus naturalistically. If God produced humans destined for everlasting life by ontological emergence, then either the original content of creation was not merely physical, or God supernaturally informed and enriched successive stages of the cosmos with ontological dimensions, structures, dynamics, and characteristics that it did not contain and could not have generated. Naturalists may claim that science will eventually explain the physical generation of all dimensions of human life and experience. But until it does, supernaturalism and implicit soul-body dualism are more reasonable positions because they do not founder on the principle of sufficient cause or anything else we know from experience, science, or God's revelation in Scripture.

### CONCLUSION

A number of metaphysical options can combine biological evolution and ontological emergence with the supernaturalism, potential for eternal life, and soul-body dualism implicit in the biblical narrative of God's everlasting relationship with humans. But theistic naturalism understood in terms of emergent physicalism is not among them.

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### NOTES

1. In 1995 an entire issue of *Faith and Philosophy* (Hasker 1995) was devoted to "Christian Philosophy and the Mind-Body Problem" and included articles defending various dualist and monist positions by David Lewis, Robert Adams, Peter van Inwagen, Lynne Rudder-Baker, Eleonore Stump, William Hasker, Keith Yandell, Charles Taliaferro, and Hugh McCann.

2. Green and Palmer (2005) present four views: substance dualism (Stewart Goetz 2012), emergent dualism (William Hasker 1999; 2005), non-reductive physicalism (Nancey Murphy 2005; 2006), and material constitution (Kevin Corcoran 1998; 2001).

3. Monist conclusions are typically drawn from the Old Testament, selected texts, and limited contexts. They are based on the assumption that physicalism or materialism is true and consistent with, if not affirmed by Scripture, and that the burden of proof is on dualism. See, for example, the approach and arguments for monistic anthropology and eschatology in Green (2008). In my view, scholarship should be open—not presuming modern monism or traditional dualism—and it should come to a coherent conclusion that takes full account of the most reasonable interpretations of all relevant texts. N. T. Wright's *Resurrection of the Son of God* (2003) is a model of good scholarship.

N. T. Wright recently rejected what he understands by *dualism* in favor of *differentiated unity* (Wright 2011). However, what Wright rejects are outdated and caricatured versions of substance dualism, not the views of most traditional Christian theologians, current substance dualists, or the definition of dualism proposed in this article. In fact, Wright reiterates the two-stage



eschatology that entails an ontological person-body dichotomy. See Goetz (2012) for a sound response. I am grateful to Brandon Rickabaugh of Biola University for bringing Wright's paper to my attention.

4. In 2010 Georg Gasser brought together a collection of essays by various defenders of philosophical monism and dualism (especially Thomist dual principle monism) (Gasser 2010).

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