



Should Christians or Muslims Be Dualists? A Critical Review of Two Articles¹

Haji Muhammad Legenhausen²

Received: 2021-05-31

Accepted: 2021-11-08

Abstract

Charles Taliaferro's "Philosophy of Mind and the Christian" begins with a loaded question: "Are we thoroughly physical beings, or do we contain some nonphysical part, something we may call a soul, spirit, or mind?" The question presents us with a false dilemma, for there is also the possibility that we are neither merely material beings nor do we contain a soul as a nonphysical part of us. Taliaferro follows this with a list of other questions pertaining to the philosophy of mind and asks whether Christians should give answers to these sorts of questions that differ from non-Christian colleagues. It seems odd to divide colleagues based on Christianity with regard to these questions, for it means that if the Christian colleagues do have a particular take on these issues, it will be different from that of non-Christian theistic colleagues. Perhaps, however, Taliaferro's department consists only of Christians and atheists. In this case, however, Taliaferro seems to think that there will be a uniformity in Christian thought that seems somewhat doubtful.

Keywords

Christians, Muslims, Dualists, Interaction, Individuation

-
1. Charles Taliaferro, "Philosophy of Mind and the Christian," *Christian Theism and the Problems of Philosophy*, (ed.) Michael D. Beaty, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990, pp. 230-253; Charles Taliaferro and Steward Goetz, "The Prospect of Christian Materialism," *Christian Scholars Review*, XXXVII, No. 3, Spring 008, pp. 03-321.

2. The Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute, Qom, Iran. legenhausen@yahoo.com

* Legenhausen, M. (2021). Should Christians or Muslims Be Dualists? A Critical Review of Two Articles. *Journal of Theosophia Islamica*, 1(2), pp. 75-104. Doi: 10.22081/JTI.2022.61070.1017

Methods and What is at Stake

Taliaferro thinks Christians should have their particular philosophy of mind: “a philosophy of the divine mind or person, God, and created minds or persons.” Without such a distinctive philosophy of mind, they will not be Christians “in anything remotely like the classical understanding of Christianity.” Here we fail to understand what is meant by “classical.” Does it refer to the Hellenistic period of Christianity, the high middle ages, or something else? It seems that there were many Christian thinkers in the Hellenistic period and throughout the middle ages who did not think of God and created persons as having this feature in common: both have a soul or mind.

Taliaferro continues with the presentation of twenty religious doctrines covering everything from divine omnipresence to the existence of devils and of heaven and hell, and he claims that such beliefs require a particular view of the issues in the philosophy of mind. In order to narrow down exactly where Christians should stand on issues of the philosophy of mind, Taliaferro presents the significant theories debated in this field: eliminative materialism, identity theory, functionalism, property dualism, substance dualism, and idealism. Some of these seem incompatible with Christianity, like eliminative materialism. However, we would not be so quick about this, for there is no limit to the ingenuity of philosophical interpretations of religious beliefs. It would not surprise us if some such interpretation could be given according to which religious beliefs would be compatible with eliminative materialism.

Suppose some group of devoted Christians find the philosophical arguments in favor of eliminative materialism convincing. According to Taliaferro, such people have deviated from Christian orthodoxy and should revise their philosophical views or face the prospect of losing

their faith. There is, however, another alternative. Some Christians could develop a philosophical interpretation of Christianity compatible with eliminative materialism, a daunting task, to be sure, but not one that we should judge impossible merely because of the prima facie incompatibility of religious teachings and materialism. Seriously, we have doubts about whether such a task could be accomplished. Our point is only that to come to a considered judgment about this would require much more than a mere comparison of a list of doctrines. We should have to find out that attempts, such as those of van Inwagen, Zimmerman, and others, to provide reinterpretations of religious and materialist teachings with the aim of reconciliation run into dead ends, and that the prospects for alternative routes are dim. (Of course, much of the argumentation in favor of Christian materialism was not yet written when Taliaferro published this article; but Taliaferro discusses such views in the second article, reviewed below).

1. Dualism

In this section of his paper, Taliaferro does two things: first, he defends dualism against some Christian theological misgivings; and second, he proposes that dualism provides the theologian with a tool whereby a philosophical explanation can be given for various religious claims that would seem absurd if persons were identified with their bodies.

The guiding assumption of the discussion is that if persons are not their bodies, then we should adopt some form of dualism to describe the relationship between bodies and souls. This is questionable. Suppose, for example, that one is an Aristotelian. The Aristotelian will grant that the human person is not the body, for the body remains as a corpse after the person dies, and the person is not the corpse. The Aristotelian holds that a person is constituted by body and soul, where

the soul is not a mental substance in contrast to the extended substance of the boy but is the form that gives life to the body, or entelechy.

2. Minds and Bodies

Taliaferro begins this section with some methodological remarks: we have to start philosophizing somewhere better than with a common-sense view of things. This is hardly convincing. Descriptive metaphysics is undoubtedly a valuable way of drawing out metaphysical principles inspired by how one may consider things and talk about them independently of other philosophical traditions. However, the alternative to descriptive metaphysics is not, as Taliaferro would suggest, “to begin with what does not seem to be the case,” but to begin with other views that have been expounded regardless of how intuitive they may or may not be. Alternatives to descriptive metaphysics may be found by starting with views advocated in the naturalist and materialist traditions or any other philosophical traditions. We might, for example, begin with the view that selves are monads, as described by Leibniz. The so-called common-sense view has no special authority in metaphysics any more than it does in geometry.

In the course of his methodological reflections, Taliaferro proposes a principle of property non-identity that we would like to examine more closely:

If there is reason to believe one can conceive of some property, be it the property of being a father or being in pain, without conceiving of another, being a bank robber, or being in a specific material state, then one has reason to believe the properties are not identical (Taliaferro, 1990).

We can find no reason to accept this claim unless the following assertion support it:

(I) If one can conceive of some property without conceiving

another, then the properties are not identical.

By contraposition, (I) is equivalent to (II):

(II) If properties F and G are identical, then one cannot conceive of F without conceiving G.

Both (I) and (II) are ambiguous, as is the quotation from Taliaferro's text, and the ambiguity is one to which recent philosophy has devoted much attention. Let F be the property of being made of gold, and let G be made of metal with the atomic number 79. From the fact that one might not know that the metal with the atomic number 79 is gold, one should not conclude that the properties F and G are not identical (whether or not they are identical is another question that need not be addressed here, for it would require a metaphysical theory of properties).¹ So, if not knowing that gold is the metal with the atomic number 79 makes it possible for one to conceive of F without conceiving of G, then there is good reason to suspect that (I) and (II) are incorrect.

All of this will be beside the point. However, if Taliaferro wants to target eliminative materialism, the eliminative materialist does not say that pains and states of the central nervous system are identical but rather that the mental states are illusory. According to such eliminative materialists as Patricia Churchland, being in pain, for example, is not a real property at all. So, the argument for property dualism based on the claim that one can conceive mental properties without conceiving physical ones fails for at least two reasons:

1. one may deny that this is a good criterion for the non-identity of properties;
2. it is irrelevant to eliminative materialism.

1. For a comparison of various identity conditions that have been proposed for properties (Swoyer, 2009).

Taliaferro insists that conceivability is a good indicator of possibility—despite arguments from such philosophers as Margaret Wilson and Sydney Shoemaker, which he rejects—and that since we can conceive of any physical state without the accompaniment of any mental state and vice versa, we should embrace dualism.

Taliaferro is right to object to the arguments of Wilson and Shoemaker since they consider conceivability of the mind without the physical to show no more than that no contradiction has been noticed in the supposition of mental states without physical states or that a priori entailment from the mental to the physical has not been noticed. When Taliaferro considers conceivability to indicate the possibility, he does not mean conceivability due to neglect of a contradiction! Perhaps we should consider it inconceivable that there should be a gold nugget that is not formed from a metal with atomic number 79. At least one might hold the position (call this “position A”) that once one understands the atomic structure of gold, it is inconceivable that there should be gold without that structure—for, without the structure, it just would not be gold. On the other hand, some philosophers might claim (“position B”) that since there are people who know that certain coins are pure gold, but they do not know anything about atomic numbers, this by itself is enough to show that gold and metal with atomic number 79 are independently conceivable. If we take position A, we will reject the claims of Wilson and Shoemaker, for the ability to conceive will show not only that there is no unnoticed logical relation that would block the conception, but also that one does not have knowledge of a posteriori necessary truths that would invalidate the conception. This, however, will not help Taliaferro to win plausibility for dualism, since a materialist might claim that if one understood a posteriori necessary truth about the essence of the

mental, one would no more be able to conceive of mental phenomena in the absence of any supporting physical phenomena than one would be able to conceive of gold without the element of atomic number 79. If, on the other hand, one adopts position B, then the ability to conceive the independence of the mental from the physical does not show that it is so independent, any more than the ignorance of one who does not know the atomic number of the gold in a coin would show that atoms of gold might have more or less than 79 protons.

We conclude that the thought experiments considered by Taliaferro give us no reason for accepting the substantive dualist point of view.

Taliaferro argues:

If we have properties no physical object can have, it follows that we are not a physical object. Physical objects cannot enjoy disembodied existence, nor can they be destroyed and gain new bodies (Taliaferro, 1990, p. 244).

A Christian materialist might respond that persons have properties no merely physical object can have or that no physical object except a person can have. It will be more difficult for materialists to deal with disembodied existence, but there have been people, including some Christian apologists, who have considered the soul to be a subtle body (Martin & Barresi, 2006).

Of course, God will be considered as an exception by most Christian materialists, even though there have been anthropomorphists who have considered God to have a body, and hylomorphic views of God as embodied in the world arise from time to time. Perhaps Taliaferro does not consider such views because they are not taken seriously by most philosophers today, and one certainly cannot be

expected to offer arguments against every view that someone might have that is opposed to the one that is defended. Taliaferro does, however, consider the analogy between arguments for the independence of the mind from the body and the independence of God from the world: since in both cases we can conceive the former without the latter, we have reason to believe in both forms of independence. Taliaferro does not, however, consider the analogy between his “thought experiments” and the fact that many people would claim that they can conceive of the world without God, and the Churchlands conceive of persons without souls. Should these be taken as a reason to believe that the world is independent of God or that persons do not necessarily have souls? Such ideas are not incoherent, even if they are wrong, but Taliaferro claims that his independent arguments based on what one can conceive should be taken as reasons to believe their conclusions in the absence of reasons to believe that his arguments are incoherent (Taliaferro, 1990).

3. Causal Interaction and Individuation

Taliaferro considers the two objections to substance dualism that form its title in this section.

According to the first objection, material and non-material things are so different that it is inconceivable how they could causally interact. His case would have been stronger if he provided a detailed analysis of a philosopher who makes this claim instead of considering a straw man form of the argument. In any case, one of the most challenging problems for dualism is not a priori claims that material and non-material entities cannot interact but how such interaction can be understood. Despite its incredible difficulty, we do not think such a project is hopeless. Our point is instead that the difficulty for dualism posed by the issue of causal interaction cannot be answered with the

claim that the opponent of dualism has not proved that there can be no such interaction. Anyone who proposes causal interaction between the mental and the physical, regardless of whether they are dualists or not, should be expected to field the question of how this interaction is supposed to work.

The second objection is that if souls are not physical, they cannot be individuated physically. So, two persons with the same beliefs, desires, memories, and other mental properties, would not have anything to distinguish them. Taliaferro tosses this objection off almost as quickly as the first with the rejoinder that there are also philosophical problems with the ultimate grounds for distinguishing physical objects. No mention is made of the long history of this problem. That matter was taken to distinguish entities of the same species in medieval philosophy so that Aquinas would hold that each angel had to be of a distinct species. Because of this historical background, the second objection becomes prominent; and so, a response to this objection that does not consider the reasons that Aquinas and others had for their views will be unsatisfactory.

Some recent philosophers would answer that the individuality of souls is primitive (Adams, 1979; Legenhausen, 1989). Taliaferro does not provide a defense of such a position.¹ To answer the objection that immaterial souls cannot be distinguished, some indication of this or some other position should be given.

4. Concluding Reflections

Taliaferro presents his views as natural implications of Christian

1. He writes: "I think there are plausible grounds for believing that there are haecceities, though these are not, in my view, strong enough to carry the day fully against the antidualist attack." (Taliaferro, 1994, p. 209).

religious beliefs. At the same time, he does not acknowledge the wide variety of Christian philosophical views related to mind and soul that have been elaborated through the ages, some of which—including some essential ones—are inconsistent with his own. In the sketchy form in which he admits to having treated the issues, his arguments should not be expected to be very convincing. We find it is more like a statement of the author's position: Christian and dualist. Often the position is overstated to suggest that dualism is the only reasonable option for a Christian philosopher. Consider the following, fairly typical, remark: "But any worldview recognizably Christian must preserve a fairly robust sense in which God and we are persons. We are in the image of God." (Taliaferro, 1990) First of all, Christians seem to have gotten by reasonably well for several centuries without any robust concept of persons, let alone a univocal sense of being a person that applies to humans and God. Tacking on the Biblical allusion to man being created in the image of God indicates that Taliaferro thinks that the Bible verse is to be interpreted in terms of ordinary personhood. A glance through the history of Biblical exegesis and Christian theology would suffice to show that other interpretations are possible.

Most Greek Christian writers link the divine image with the soul and exclude the body from participation in it. But, while this is the majority opinion, it is not the universal view, for there is a significant minority that associate the divine image with the total human being, body, soul, and spirit together. Irenaeus of Lyons is a noteworthy exponent of this second standpoint (Ware, 1999).

Although we are neither Christian nor materialist, and we are not sure whether Taliaferro would consider me a dualist or not, we can find several reasons to study the position Taliaferro sketches. First,

Christians and Muslims have much theology in common. We believe in one God who is the Creator of the world and all things in it. Many of the attributes we ascribe to God are also the same. We also believe that God chose Abraham, Noah, Moses, and others, as His prophets. We believe in angels, in a final day of judgment, and the resurrection of the dead. Given so much creed in common, if a philosopher says that Christianity requires us to have certain philosophical beliefs, this gives us some *prima facie* reason to think that the requirement is taken to apply to Islam, too. Since we think that Islam does not require us to be dualists, and we do not think this depends on any difference between Christianity and Islam, it follows that we should deny Taliaferro's claim that Christianity requires dualism. Secondly, we may benefit from examining specific arguments raised by Taliaferro, such as the relationship between possibility and conceivability that we discussed above. Thirdly, and finally, there are critical methodological points of which we might never have given a second thought were it not for considering the positions stated by Taliaferro:

1. Philosophy ignores history at its peril. We believe that good philosophy of religion should consider the historical traditions of thought that have contributed to what Christians, Muslims, and others have thought about the issues. We should not be slaves of tradition, but it needs to be understood. When we show their relations to historical reference points, our positions become more apparent.

2. We would like a plea for tolerance concerning what religious doctrines require of philosophical positions. Religious doctrines are given in a language designed to be accessible to ordinary believers. Philosophical doctrines require expression in a more subtle form of language with the result that its claims can be easily misunderstood by those who lack appropriate training. Religious

philosophy is often speculative because it seeks to provide a theory that can accommodate religious doctrine through a unique interpretation using which the doctrine finds expression in the philosophical theory. Because of this, we would resist claims that religious doctrine requires us to be dualists, personalists, realists, haecceitists, or opposites. The plea for philosophical tolerance is not due to fears of an inquisition as much as fears that statements that all believers must hold some set of philosophical views will stifle the development of what might turn out to be better viewed. We agree with Plantinga and Taliaferro that religious beliefs should inform good religious' philosophy. However, we think that informing can be carried out in many different ways, as is evident from a review of the history of Christian, Muslim, and other kinds of religious philosophies.

3. We are thus very skeptical about how much philosophical mileage can be gained from a common-sense approach to what religious creeds seem at first glance to be saying. What scripture seems to be saying, in many cases, turns out to need radical reinterpretation: both the Bible and the Quran seem to many people to say that the earth is young, that the sun moves around the earth, that there is nothing wrong with slavery, that humans did not evolve from other primates, and that God walked through the garden or sat on His throne. Attempts to develop philosophical views to accommodate an uneducated interpretation of these claims are wrongheaded.

Goetz and Taliaferro divide the second article, "The Prospect of Christian Materialism," into three parts. The first introduces Christian Materialism; the second part argues that the Christian materialist critique of dualism fails and that dualism provides a more plausible interpretation of Christian doctrine than materialism; the third recapitulates the argument against materialism from the Incarnation.

I. Some Reasons for Going Materialistic

Goetz and Taliaferro consider four arguments for Christian materialism.

1. The Argument from Simplicity and Self-Awareness

Van Inwagen takes as primary his belief that he is a living animal. Here, he places himself in the same metaphilosophical camp with Taliaferro, who applauds the reliance on common sense and takes things to be the way they seem to be unless presented with sufficient argument to the contrary.

2. The Argument from Interaction and Individuation

Both of these arguments were considered in the earlier paper. Here they are represented in the work of Lynn Rudder Baker. Baker argues that dualists have never been able to give a satisfying answer to how mind and body can interact. She also argues that since souls are individuated by their bodies when embodied, they lose any principle of individuation when disembodied. She also holds that nothing exists that does not always and everywhere have a principle of individuation. She concludes that immaterial souls do not exist.

3. The Argument from the Necessary Dependence of Thinking on the Physical

This argument is taken from van Inwagen, who claims that if we correctly understood the dependence of thinking on the condition of the brain, we would not claim to be able to imagine ourselves as disembodied.

4. The Argument from Religious Doctrines of Death and Resurrection

Trenton Merricks has argued that if dualism were true, then

disembodied existence would be sufficient for life after death, and there would be no need for belief in the Resurrection. Since the Resurrection is emphasized in Christian (and Muslim) teachings, it must be because there would be no life after death without it. Hence, Christianity (and Islam) presuppose that dualism is false and there are no souls. Both van Inwagen and Merricks also argue that scripture teaches death to be an evil that is overcome by the Resurrection. If dualism were true, however, it is hard to see why the bodily resurrection should be needed to overcome the evil of death.

II. Reasons for Remaining Dualistic

Before addressing the arguments mentioned above, Taliaferro reminds us that “Christians down through the ages have believed that human beings are composed of physical bodies and non-physical souls.” If this is supposed to be an argument from consensus for dualism, there have been enough nondualistic interpretations of the soul and afterlife to answer it, Tertullian being the most notable example from the Church Fathers.¹

Taliaferro seeks to support dualism as a Christian view, and dualism has dominated most of Christian thought history. However, the question may be raised as to whether this domination is due to original Christian teachings or the influence of various strands of Platonism among early theologians. There is no scarcity of Biblical scholars who hold that the Biblical view of the soul is not immaterialist, and there is much disagreement on the view or views to

1. Tertullian argued that souls had to be corporeal because otherwise they could not be kept in a place in the afterlife where they would be punished, and they could not have the corporeal punishments described in the Bible (Schaff, 2006).

be found in the New Testament.¹ Furthermore, despite the predominance of dualistic views, numerous Christian thinkers have challenged dualism in the modern period (Thomson, 2008). So, it should not be presumed that if no definitive case can be made to refute dualism, it should win by default. This is not an area in which decisive refutations are to be expected. What is needed is the careful weighing of philosophical argumentation and sincere efforts to seek the guidance of religious and philosophical tradition.

1. The Argument from Simplicity and Self-Awareness

In response to van Inwagen, Taliaferro and Goetz find it odd that anyone can introspect that one is an animal but explain it by supposing that what can be introspected is one's spatial limitation: we seem to occupy the space occupied by our bodies. However, this need not imply that we are our living bodies, for we would have the same introspective experience if Taliaferro's own "integrative dualism" were true. Furthermore, Taliaferro and Goetz argue that our failure to be able to introspect spatial parts makes the facts of introspection count more in favor of dualism than animalism:² "it is what is not included in this awareness that is the basis for a belief in dualism." (Taliaferro, 2008)

Although we would grant that introspection provides essential insight into the nature of the self, reports by different thinkers about the philosophical import of introspection vary widely. Tertullian, for example, reports that the soul is transmitted in the sex act because, during the climax, he introspects the emission of part of the soul!

1. See the discussion and references in (Murphy, 2006).

2. Animalism is the view that persons are most fundamentally animals (Snowden, 1990).

Taliaferro seeks to undermine the materialists' introspective evidence by showing that dualists can explain how it arises. Since the body and soul are associated, the soul takes the spatial perspective of the body, producing the illusion that the soul is material.

If the materialist cannot account for the introspective evidence of the dualist, it would seem that introspection should count in favor of dualism. However, materialists have their explanations for dualistic intuitions! Paul Bloom, for example, maintains that studies of child development suggest how our dualistic intuitions could result from evolutionary pressures (Bloom, 2004). David Papineau holds that dualistic intuitions are due to some different factors, for each of which he provides extended discussion (Papineau, 2002). Hence, both the defenders of dualism and their attackers have their ways of showing that the intuitions utilized by the other side are misleading.

Nancey Murphy has argued that the conflicting intuitions that figure so prominently in discussions of the philosophy of mind are due to the linguistic resources that participants in the debate utilize (Murphy, 2006). Our intuitions are shaped by the research paradigms in which we work and the linguistic resources through which explanations are requested and given. Dualism and physicalism may be seen as competing for research programs, each of which has its linguistic resources employed to explain various phenomena. She observes:

In this light, it is clear that the physicalist program is doing exceptionally well: all recent advances in the neurobiological understanding of cognition, emotion, and action, as well as progress in certain forms of cognitive science, are the product of a physicalist understanding of human nature. In contrast, scarcely any research follows from a dualist theory.... Thus, however inconclusive the philosophical arguments may be, we can say that science provides as much evidence as could be desired for the physicalist thesis (Murphy, 2006).

Murphy concludes (for these and other reasons) that Christians would do better to abandon their traditional dualism in favor of physicalism. Whether or not she is right about the advisability of physicalism, she provides good reason denying that an appeal to intuitions will suffice to convince anyone that we have or do not have immaterial souls.

2. The Argument from Interaction and Individuation

Taliaferro and Goetz argue that Christian materialists can be hoisted on their petards, for if they argue against the immaterial soul that it poses difficulties for causal interaction with the material world, then they will face the same problem themselves concerning God's action in the world since nearly all Christian materialists admit that God is immaterial.

There are several responses open to the Christian materialist. The basic structure of these responses is to hold that God's action in the world is significantly different from the soul's action in a human; and that while immateriality is an obstacle to understanding the soul's governance of the person, divine action in the world can be understood in such a way that immateriality poses no problem there. Consider, for a moment, Avicenna. Avicenna held that both souls and God are immaterial, so Goetz and Taliaferro might consider him an ally. However, according to Avicenna, how the soul governs the body is considerably different from how God acts in the world. God's action in the world is through emanation, which

is a non-temporal relationship through which existence extends from God, as that which is necessary concerning existence (*wajib al-wujud*), to the contingent (*mumkin al-wujud*). The emanationism model of God-world causal interaction is a metaphysical relation rather than an efficient temporal causal interaction, presumably to

govern the relationship between body and soul. Immateriality is no obstacle to emanationism, but it is a problem if one holds a dualistic view that material and mental events are related by efficient causality.

For a contemporary answer to this objection, we can turn again to Nancey Murphy. She advocates a non-interventionist account of divine action (Murphy, 2009). According to this account, God acts by realizing the potentialities of quantum events and by realizing natural laws and effecting His will through human action. Regardless of the merits of this proposal, what is clear is that the account given of divine action need not have any bearing on the account one may offer for human action, and, thus, accounts of divine action that assume the immateriality of God need not undermine objections to mind: body dualisms because the causal interaction between minds and bodies is inexplicable on dualist principles.

Another problem for the Christian materialist raised by Goetz and Taliaferro pertains specifically to the Christian doctrine of the incarnation. If Christian materialists maintain that dualism is wrong because the immaterial cannot have any causal relationship with a physical body, they will be at a loss as to how to explain the incarnation, in which God, who is immaterial, is immaterial takes the body of Christ as His own. It is tempting to dismiss this problem and take a cheap shot at Christian doctrine as a Muslim commentator. Instead, we will offer two brief suggestions.

First, according to Christian teaching, the relation between the divine nature of Christ is not that a divine soul enlivens the body of Jesus, whereas human souls enliven other bodies. Christians hold that Christ is divine in soul and body. Christ is said to have two natures, divine, and human, but they do not divide along the lines of soul and body, respectively.

Second, Christians might understand the incarnation in terms of manifestation. One could hold that Christ is a perfect manifestation of God. This would not seem to require any dualistic causal interaction. Taliaferro argues that since Christ is the second person of the Trinity, and since Christ, as the second person of the Trinity, existed before his corporeal birth, Christ cannot be understood as identical to his body, or his living body, or even as being constituted by his body. The Christian materialist, however, may hold that the second person of the Trinity exists eternally and that when Jesus (peace be with him) comes is born, he may be said to be the incarnation of the second person in the sense that he manifests the second person in knowledge and will without being composed of a body and soul as dualistically conceived.

Trenton Merricks goes further by arguing that not only is the incarnation compatible with a non-dualist view of persons, but that dualism is inconsistent with the doctrine of the incarnation and, hence, that Christians should be physicalists (Merricks, 2007).¹

Lynne Rudder Baker holds that her constitutional view of the human person provides a “neater picture” of the doctrine of the incarnation than is available to the dualist because “it allows believers to hold that Christ is wholly immaterial in his divine nature and wholly material in his human nature.” (Baker, 2007)

No matter how this issue is to be sorted out, there is no clear-cut argument from the doctrine of the incarnation to dualism. A plea for tolerance should be heeded in the absence of any overwhelming

1. The main idea of the argument is that dualists interpret having a body in terms of knowledge and control by the soul of the body. But God has knowledge and control over all bodies, yet they would not want to say that God has a multiplicity of bodies.

argument in favor of dualism or against it. Christians should accept that some of them will be dualists, and others will reject dualism without any of them being less Christian because of the side they favor in this debate.

3. The Argument from the Necessary Dependence of Thinking on the Physical

Goetz and Taliaferro appeal to the authority of Thomas Nagel to argue that the relation between the mental and the physical is contingent and that, therefore, the relation between the soul and the body is contingent. However, reductive laws can be given. No theory identifying mental states and brain states does not mean that the relationship is contingent. Token identity theorists, for example, allow mental and physiological concepts not to correspond, yet one cannot have had different mental states without having had a different physiological condition.

So, the abandonment of reductionism or type identity theories does not imply an endorsement of any dualism. One can maintain that the person and body are necessarily associated, either because persons are their bodies or because they are constituted by their bodies, without accepting any kind of psychophysical reductionism.

4. The Argument from Religious Doctrines of Death and Resurrection

Christian materialists claim that a great advantage of materialism is that it makes sense of the resurrection. If souls are immaterial and can go to heaven after death, why should they have to come back down to earth at the resurrection? What advantage would there be to being resurrected? The materialist claims that without a body, there is no afterlife. So, the resurrection is necessary for there to be divine rewards and punishments in the afterlife.

Goetz and Taliaferro argue that an embodied life is a great good, and even if there is disembodied existence for the soul in heaven, it will still be better to become re-embodied at the resurrection.

Goetz and Taliaferro also claim that the Christian materialist's resurrection account is problematic. According to the materialist, the problem is that if the body is destroyed and the body and the person are identical, then the person is destroyed. If the person is destroyed, it is not easy to understand the criteria that could be used to support the contention that the same person (i.e., same body) will be brought back to life with the general resurrection. It is this problem that has led van Inwagen to the clever suggestion that God might miraculously prevent bodies from being destroyed and store them in some unknown manner until the resurrection (Inwagen, 1978).¹ If the body is destroyed and the person is not identical to the body but is constituted by the body, as in Lynne Rudder Baker's view, then the body of the resurrection will have to constitute the same person as the one that lived before the resurrection as constituted by its mortal body. Since Baker's form of materialism is one in which the same person does not imply being constituted by the same body, Dean Zimmerman has accused her of holding a kind of "dualism in disguise." (Zimmerman, 2004, pp. 338)

Even if the resurrection poses problems for Christian materialists, dualists will also face their problems about the resurrection. The traditional view held by both Muslims and Christians is that at the resurrection, one is not given a new body, but one's

1. Hud Hudson notes that "whereas the view originated with van Inwagen, it was put forth as an answer to a "so-just-how-can-it-be-done challenge" and not as a thesis fully endorsed by its author." (Hudson, 2007, pp. 216).

former body is resurrected and transformed in some way (glorified, immortalized, or in some other manner perfected). So, both dualists and materialists must come up with some explanation of the sense in which the resurrected body can be said to be the body that had previously died, or else they can argue that the religious doctrine of the resurrected body is to be interpreted in some way compatible with the idea that the resurrected body will be a new body and not the same body that had died. There are several candidate criteria based on which one may claim that body a that died at t will be resurrected at some future date, even if this body has been pulverized in the meantime.

1. Psychological state criteria. If body a and body b are related to one another so that the psychological states of a are carried over through the psychological states of b, regardless of the temporal gap, then both a and b may be identified as some person's body.

2. Corporeal component criteria. Body a at t_n is the same body as b at t_m if only if a and b have the same parts. In order to avoid a regress, advocates of this view usually assume that there are ultimate indivisible parts or atoms.

3. Haecceitism. This is the view that the identity of a with b is primitive and unanalyzable and that there is a brute metaphysical fact of the matter that haecceity of a is the haecceity of b and, so, that a is identical to b, or that a and b do not have unique haecceity and are not identical.

4. Conventionalism. The identity of a with b is a matter of arbitrary convention.

5. Moderate Anti-Haecceitism. This is a form of conventionalism that places constraints on the conventions to be validated, usually by

appeal to some corporeal or psychological state criteria. According to moderate anti-haecceitism, such constraints are not sufficient to determine the identity, and a conventional determination within such limits may be given if identity is not left indeterminate.

Dualists might suggest a version of psychological state criteria and hold that the body with which one is incarnated at the resurrection is one's former body. Through the embodiment of the immaterial soul, the resurrected body embodies the psychological criteria that make it count as the body that had died.

On the other hand, materialists could adopt any of the five criteria suggested supporting the claim that the same body continues after the gap between death and the resurrection. Conventions, for example, may be humanly or divinely instituted. So, one could hold that there is no fact of the matter that might determine whether the resurrected body is identical to the body of the deceased; but that by divine convention, God may determine that the resurrected body is the same as that which had died, perhaps within the metaphysical constraint that the resurrected body support psychological functions continuous with those of the previously deceased body.

One of the most contentious issues in Islamic theology is whether the Muslim philosophers such as Ibn Sina and Mulla Sadra accepted the resurrection of the body (*ma'ad al-jismani*). Opponents accuse them of rejecting the corporeal resurrection and instead relegating it to a product of the imagination or taking place in an imaginal world. A moderate anti-haecceitist divine conventionalism, however, could be used to defend the position of the philosophers because according to this position, the divine decree that the resurrected body, whether existing in the sensible or imaginal worlds, is the same as that of the deceased would make it so in reality.

However, our point here is neither to defend the Muslim philosophers nor moderate anti-haecceitism but to suggest that there will be a wide range of options open to whether one is Christian or Muslim, dualist or materialist believing philosophers for solving problems about the resurrection. The doctrine of the resurrection does not require Muslims or Christians to be dualists or materialists.

This is not to say that it makes no difference to one's religious beliefs whether one is a dualist or a materialist. Dualists hold that the person exists in a disembodied form after death and before the resurrection, while contemporary Christian materialists deny this. No matter which position one takes on this issue, Christian and Islamic sources seem to raise difficulties. This might be interpreted to mean that the sources should not be taken too literally on such issues. Rather than attempting to devise complex exegetical theses to fit with a preferred philosophical view, we may interpret that lack of any clear metaphysical position that can be derived from scripture to indicate that at least some religious truth is independent of the metaphysical theories through which it is to be understood by philosophers.

III. A Positive Christian Argument against Materialism

The "positive argument" given by the authors against materialism is not new but a restatement of their conviction that the Christian doctrine of the incarnation is incompatible with materialism. Above we pointed out how some Christian materialists have responded to this problem, and we suggested another way the Christian materialist might counter such an argument by re-interpreting incarnation in terms of manifestation.

In their introduction to this discussion, the authors confess a conviction that "if some object or substance is nonphysical, then it is essentially nonphysical." They also hold, "if an object or substance is

physical, then it is essentially physical.” Moreover, they conclude, “Thus, it would be absurd (we suggest) to hold that this physical journal might become (either slowly or instantaneously) nonphysical. Would such a change amount to parts of the journal being replaced by a hallucination or journal after-image?” (Talafierro & Goetz, 2008, pp. 319-320)

Contrary to the view of the authors is that advocated by Mulla Sadra. According to Mulla Sadra’s view, a physical object or substance might become nonphysical. In order to understand this suggestion in a manner in which it is not absurd, we need to introduce two principles and one thesis of the philosophy of Mulla Sadra. The principles are the graduated nature of existence (*tashkik al-wujud*) and substantial motion (*al-harakat al-jawhariyyah*). The thesis is: that the soul is corporeal in its origination and spiritual in its survival (*jismani al-huduth wa ruhani al-baqa’*).

The Grades of Existence.

According to Mulla Sadra, a thing might have more or less existence, or its existence may be more or less intense. Pure existence, the most intense existence, is identified with God. Created existents are divided into sensible, imaginal, and intellectual realms, with successively more intense levels of existence.

Substantial motion.

According to Mulla Sadra, when a substance changes, the change does not only involve the accidents of the substance so that the substance stays the same while the accidents change; instead, changes in accidents reflect changes in the substance underlying them.

Through substantial motion, Mulla Sadra holds, the existence of a thing may intensify so that it may even change from being merely physical to becoming spiritual, and this is what he takes to happen

with the development of the soul. The human soul begins as a corporeal principle of the fetus's life. Gradually, however, it becomes spiritual and even becomes a separable substance.

This view may be considered a kind of dualism if dualism only means the denial that everything is merely physical. Mulla Sadra's view differs considerably from Cartesian dualism, however. It does not divide the world into mental and physical substances, but, instead, it considers a continuum of increasingly intense levels of existence with the matter at the low end and God at the apex. It is not a psychophysical dualism because it does not identify the immaterial with the mental. Even vegetable souls are nonmaterial substances that emerge out of vegetable material.

Finally, by way of illustration, consider the example of the philosophical journal mentioned by Taliaferro and Goetz. We may begin by considering not the temporal development of the journal but its metaphysical development from the physical to the spiritual. Physically, the journal consists of some bound pages covered by some ink patterns. This is not all that the journal is, however. If the letters printed in the journal were erased and replaced by others, the physical magazine might remain through a process that ended by destroying the journal so that it would no longer be the *Christian Scholar's Review*. At a higher level of existence, the journal does not consist of paper and ink (and does not change into hallucinations or after-images) but consists of articles circulating among scholars as objects of their reflection. At a higher level of existence, the journal exists independently of whether it is printed on paper or published in electronic format, and it exists whether or not anyone reads all the articles. It is a purely spiritual entity. So, what begins (not temporally but at the lowest level of the chain of being) as material paper and ink evolves or emerges through

substantial motion into something imaginal and finally intellectual.

We do not claim that Mulla Sadra would approve of the way I have presented this example. It is only meant to draw on the mentioned principles of Mulla Sadra to illustrate how one may deny that what is physical must be essentially and exclusively so without absurdity.

IV. Concluding Reflections

Materialist views of human nature may be found among both Christians and Muslims. However, the development of sophisticated forms of Christian materialism differs markedly from the forms in which it appeared among early Christian and Muslim theologians. These developments should not be condemned as inconsistent with religion. If materialism is condemned because of inconsistency with a literal interpretation of scripture, the way is opened to the driest forms of scriptural literalism. If materialism is condemned as contrary to religious teachings because it is inconsistent with cherished philosophical intuitions, the way is opened to a philosophical dogmatism that may skew a proper understanding of religion.

There is much to recommend in Taliaferro's integrative dualism. Integrative dualism can avoid many of the objectionable features of Cartesian dualism. Indeed, Taliaferro's integrative dualism and Baker's constitution view of human nature seem to have more in common with one another than Taliaferro's view has with that of Descartes or Baker's view has with the materialist views surveyed by Lang. Given such similarities and differences, it seems rather crude to issue blanket condemnations of anything that comes under the heading of "materialism" as being contrary to religious teaching.

Judgments in favor of materialism or dualism or some other

alternative should be made based on the promise one sees in these theories for philosophical development and the philosophical elucidation of religious ideas. At this point, the advocates of the positions reviewed do not have strong enough arguments to warrant judgments that Christians (or Muslims) should abjure materialism or dualism on religious grounds.

References

1. Adams, R. M. (1979). Primitive Thisness and Primitive Identity. *The Journal of Philosophy*, 76(1), pp. 5-26.
2. Baker Lynne, R. (2007). Persons and the Natural Order (P. V. Inwagen & D. Zimmerman, Eds.). *Persons, Human and Divine*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
3. Baker, L. R. (2001). Material Persons and the Doctrine of Resurrection, *Faith and Philosophy* 18(2), pp. 151-167.
4. Bloom, P. (2004). *Descartes' Baby: How the science of child development explains what makes us human*. New York: Basic Books.
5. Hudson, H. (2007). I Am Not an Animal! *Persons, Human and Divine* (V. Inwagen & D. Zimmerman, Eds.). Oxford: Clarendon Press.
6. Inwagen, P. V. (1978). The Possibility of Resurrection. *International Journal of Philosophy of Religion*, 9(2), pp. 114-121.
7. Legenhausen, G. (1989). Moderate Anti-Haecceitism. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 49(4), pp. 625-642.
8. Martin, R. & Barresi, J. (2006). *The Rise and Fall of Soul and Self*. New York: Columbia University Press.
9. Merricks, T. (2007). The Word Made Flesh: Dualism, Physicalism, and the Incarnation. (P. V. Inwagen & D. Zimmerman, Eds.). *Persons, Human and Divine*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
10. Mulla Sadra. (2008). *Spiritual Psychology* (Latimah-Parvin Peerwani, trans.). London: ICAS.
11. Murphy, N. (2006). *Bodies and Souls, or Spirited Bodies?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
12. Murphy, N. (2006). *Bodies and Souls, or Spirited Bodies?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 112ff.
13. Murphy, Nancey. (2009). Divine Action in the Natural Order: Buridan's Ass and Schrödinger's Cat (F. L. Shults, N. Murphy, & R. J. Russell, Eds.). *Philosophy, science, and divine action*. Leiden: Brill.

14. Papineau, D. (2002). *Thinking About Consciousness*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
15. Schaff, P. (2006). *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Vol. 3). Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian, Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library.
16. Snowden, P. F. (1990). Persons, Animals, and Ourselves. *The Person and the Human Mind*, (Christopher Gill, Ed.). Oxford: Clarendon Press.
17. Swoyer, C., & Orilia, F. (1999). Properties.
18. Taliaferro, C. (1994). *Consciousness and the Mind of God*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
19. Taliaferro, C., & Goetz, S. (2008). The prospect of Christian materialism. *Christian Scholar's Review*, 37(3), 303.
20. Taliaferro, C. (1990). Philosophy of Mind and the Christian. *Christian Theism and the Problems of Philosophy* (M. D. Beaty, Ed.). Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.
21. Tertullian. (1885). *A Treatise on the Soul* (P. Holmes, Trans.). from *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (A. Roberts, J. Donaldson, & A. C. Coxe, Eds., Vol. 3). NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co.
22. Thomson, A. (2008). *Bodies of Thought: Science, Religion, and the Soul in the Early Enlightenment*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
23. Ware, K. (1999). The Soul in Greek Christianity (M. James C. Craabe, ed.). *From Soul to Self*. London and New York: Routledge.
24. Zimmerman, D. (2002). *Divine Action and Modern Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
25. Zimmerman, D. (2004). Reply to Baker. *Contemporary Debates in Philosophy of Religion* (M. L. Peterson & R. J. VanArragon, Eds.). Malden: Blackwell.