



Souls, Emergent and Created

Why Mere Emergent Dualism Is Insufficient

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Theology has something to tell us about the origin of souls (that is, minds),¹ and yet much of the contemporary literature on the soul's origination would suggest otherwise, having us believe that minds are the products of high level physical processes. While a minority report affirms a creationist-soul alternative, it is often advanced by adherents of stronger and/or traditional versions of substance dualism (for example, Thomism or Cartesian dualism).² In an attempt to avert both emergent versions of materialism³ and stronger versions of substance dualism, some have attempted to include the benefits of both in what is often called emergent substance dualism. This is the view that the soul is indeed produced by a sufficiently complex brain, but is nevertheless not reducible to the interactions of the neural parts. However,

ABSTRACT: With the challenges from science, there has been a shift away from traditional or classical versions of substance dualism (most notably Thomism and Cartesianism come to mind) toward emergentist accounts of the mind. Of particular importance for those still inclined to make some distinction between the mind and brain, emergent substance dualism provides an attractive option. However, it promises more than it can deliver. In the present article, I show that a version of emergent substance dualism, where the brain produces a soul (what I call mere emergent substance dualism), lacks the resources to account for the particularity of the soul. I show that, if, in fact, souls (in this case human souls) have primitive thisness, then physical laws could not produce these souls. That being the case, I show how creationism and emergent substance dualism, rather than being disjunctive options, are compatible. In the end, what I call emergent-creationism or creationist-emergentism provides an attractive theory of the origin of souls.

1. I am using "soul" and "mind" interchangeably.

2. John Foster has developed an argument for theism based on this intuition that theology provides some explanatory resources that otherwise are not available from philosophy. See John Foster "A Brief Defense of the Cartesian View," in *Soul, Body, and Survival: Essays on the Metaphysics of Human Persons* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 15–29. Foster argues that Divine direct causation is necessary for the creation of the soul and the establishment of the soul with a body.

3. For a set of critiques of emergent materialism as a growing trend in Christian philosophy and theology, see R. Keith Loftin and Joshua R. Farris, eds. *Christian Physicalism? Philosophical Theological Criticisms* (New York: Lexington, 2017). For a helpful exposition of variations of the emergence relation, first see John Searle, *The Rediscovery of the Mind* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 111–12.

common articulations of emergent substance dualism, with its quasi-naturalistic explanation, face a significant problem that requires a creationist explanation.⁴ In the present article, I articulate one version of emergent substance dualism that is also a version of creationism by specifically focusing on the nature of the emergence relation.⁵

In this paper, I make two claims: First, I argue that while emergent substance dualism is gaining a following, it is insufficient to procure an explanation for the particularity of the soul. In this way, Divine creationism is a necessary condition for the soul, and a sufficient condition for the soul's particularity. Second, I articulate a version of emergent substance dualism that is also a version of creationism. On this view, both neural and Divine action are necessary for the emergent mind, thus bringing about a sufficiency relation in the conjunction of the brain event with the Divine event.

Now, a note about emergent substance dualism (ESD) is in order. Once again ESD is neither materialism nor a traditional version of substance dualism, but it is a *via media* between the two. ESD is similar to emergent materialism in the following ways: (1) the mind is nonreducible to the interaction of neural parts (that is, what Searle calls emergent 1b for novel powers; emergent 2 for a novel substance),⁶ and (2) the mind is a product of the brain. Emergent substance dualism is also similar to traditional substance dualism in that it posits the reality of two substances (that is, property-bearers) each of which is irreducible to the other. I will call this view *mere* emergent substance dualism or mere emergent dualism for short (hereafter MED) in order to distinguish it from a distinct variation of emergent substance dualism, which I will advance below.⁷

The advantages of MED have been clearly communicated in a variety of contexts. Several have argued that it carries with it an in-built explanation for the natural and intimate union of mind on brain, which is situated in biologi-

4. For one of the most sophisticated and developed versions of emergent substance dualism see William Hasker, *The Emergent Self* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001). For a further, similar example, see E. J. Lowe, "Why My Body Is Not Me: The Unity Argument for Emergentist Self-Body Dualism," in *Contemporary Dualism: A Defense*, ed. Andrea Lavazza and Howard Robinson (London: Routledge, 2014). There are important distinctions between these versions of emergent substance dualism, but an exposition of these two views would take us beyond the scope of the article.

5. I develop some variants of this view, in the following: Joshua R. Farris, "Emergent Creationism: Another Option in the Origin of the Soul Debate," *Religious Studies* 50 (2014): 221–34. I originally worked it out with transcendent causality more clearly in view or as a version of property and power emergence. It seems to me, however, that this theory can be worked out as a version of emergence that is also creationist without situating it in transcendent causality, or a mere property emergence, and also without divine occasionalism. See also Joshua R. Farris, *The Soul of Theological Anthropology: A Cartesian Exploration* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

6. See Searle, *The Rediscovery of the Mind*, 111–12. Also see Hasker's *The Emergent Self*, 177–8.

7. Joshua R. Farris, "Considering Souls of the Past for Today: Soul Origins, Anthropology, and Contemporary Theology," *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 57 (2015): 368–97.

cal evolution.⁸ This latter point is relevant to the biological data that appears to securely establish a continuity of humans with higher level animal species. Thus, on MED, there are two assumptions worth grounding in an emergent explanation: (A1) Animal-human continuity in biological evolution; (A2) A natural and intimate mind-on-brain dependence. Furthermore, I will argue for a third assumption that MED excludes, but without it, one is unable, on MED, to explain at least one important fact about souls. In this way, there is a need for a third assumption (A3), as I argue below, where soul emergence requires creationism.

MED and the Problem from Particularity

To motivate MED, defenders have raised several objections from the nonnatural relation between soul and body from traditional construals. William Hasker states in the context of discussing Cartesian substance dualism, “In rejecting such dualisms, we implicitly affirm that *the human mind is produced by the human brain and is not a separate element “added to” the brain from the outside.*”⁹ In Hasker’s assumption given here, his intent seems to be to safeguard the organic integrity of body and soul. I will offer an account that appears to safeguard the organic integrity of the soul and brain, with a different picture in mind, and, more importantly, avoids a more significant problem for defenders of MED.

Not only does the relationship between the body and soul on MED seem implausible, but there is also a fact about the world for which MED simply cannot account. The fact of the soul’s property or feature of particularity (that is, souls have primitive thisnesses: intrinsic and available only from an insider’s perspective, or from God’s perspective) provides a forceful reason to move away from MED to an alternative ESD with *divine creationism*. Each individual soul, as a metaphysical simple, just is different and what makes each different is this feature/property that only the said soul has, and through which the soul has an *inside perspective*. Call this a subjective or personal thisness, which I and, presumably, each of us has. This feature supplies the metaphysical content that makes me *me*. If this is true, it is impossible, or near impossible, that the brain could produce personal souls because there is no material thing that has a primitive thisness of this sort.¹⁰ Nevertheless,

8. See Hasker, for one example, in his *The Emergent Self*. For a different view that has some of these benefits see Charles Taliaferro, *Consciousness and the Mind of God* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 114–22. For Taliaferro, the soul sees with the eyes, feels with fingers, and experiences the body in a way unmediated. However, there is a question as to the natural explanation for such an intimate relationship between mind and body. What is the reason or lawlike relation that establishes this interactive union between this body and this soul?

9. See Hasker, *The Emergent Self*, 189.

10. To assume a conventional view of the identity of material things is not necessary for the present argument, even if the present author is inclined in that way.

if we are already willing to accept Hasker's exotic view (or some similar view)—that minds actually emerge from matter—then why not also accept that souls emerge with thisness, however implausible that might sound?¹¹ The reason is simply that there is an incompatibility between the primitive thisness described here and the lawful relationship between the mind and brain, which is required by MED.¹²

Consider the possibility that Joshua exists on the earth and twin-Joshua exists on world Z. Consider further that all of the qualitative and public properties of each individual are the same, including even their thoughts (at least as they are verbalized for others). Let's also suppose that their spatial location is arbitrary because each Joshua could just as easily occupy one space over another (that is, the same relative position in each world), which would also mark the arbitrary nature of each individual's modal properties. What is it that would individuate these two individuals? It seems to me that there must remain one primitive fact that is also intrinsic to each individual that makes *this* Joshua on earth distinct from the *other* Joshua on world Z.¹³

Notice how this is different from material objects that are, in principle, publicly available. Assume we have particles with the same qualitative properties, perceptually distinguished by their relational occupation in the universe. Commonsensically, there is no qualitative distinction between this particle and another particle, apart from its spatial location. Each could have easily and arbitrarily been assigned to another spatial location, and each could have the same relative spatial location in parallel universes. We could take a number of different physical objects as illustrations of their identical nature (separated only by their relational occupation). Consider a coffee maker of a certain type, the Nespresso VertuoLine coffee maker. Presumably, the Nespresso VertuoLine coffee maker is one coffee maker with multiple instantiations of the same exact object with the same exact function. Now, the creators of Nespresso make the assumption that by using qualitatively identical parts in the appropriate configuration they can create a machine

11. See Hasker, *The Emergent Self*, 147–67. As stated, it does not seem to me that a defender of a Cartesian/creationist soul view must adopt the picture given by Hasker.

12. Both Swinburne and Lowe agree that persons could bear all the perceptibly same qualities, but remain numerically distinct. See Richard Swinburne, "How to Determine Which Is the True Theory of Personal Identity," in *Personal Identity: Complex or Simple?*, ed. Georg Gasser and Matthias Stefan (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012). In addition, Lowe helpfully states, "it is strongly arguable that the only *adequate* criterion of identity for mental states and events will be one which makes reference to their subjects. . . . Part of what makes an experience of *mine* numerically distinct from a qualitatively indistinguishable experience of *yours* is the very fact that it is *mine* as opposed to *yours*" (E. J. Lowe, "The Probable Simplicity of Personal Identity," in *Personal Identity: Complex or Simple?*, 149).

13. And, this would not be alleviated by relational properties because the fundamental property is what makes a person *that* person. One could run several other thought experiments to make the same point, e.g., the test case of identical twins. Also see Robert Merrihew Adams for similar thought experiments, "Primitive Thisness and Primitive Identity," *Journal of Philosophy* 76 (1979): 5–26.

thousands of times over that will perform the exact same function. Not so for the individual mind. Each individual mind is distinct in terms of its particularity, which becomes apparent to the individual that has an inside perspective to her thoughts. Thus, I have or instantiate a particularizing property/feature that is non-multiply-exemplifiable. This raises a further question. Is it a possibility that I might have emerged from a set of complex physical conditions (PC)?

Given the uniqueness of *this* particular mind compared to another particular mind, it seems that PC could not produce a particular mind without the intervention or injection of the primitive particularity. Barring a hylomorphic view, where matter-form relation provides an intrinsic distinction between different arrangements of matter, PCs, it would seem, are insufficient for the production of a mind.¹⁴ It is worth noting that the hylomorphic theory would cause some problems for the state of science, given the undetectability of material essences, but let us set aside these problems in this context. There is one way in which PCs might be sufficient for the production of a mind, namely by proposing laws in the world explaining the production of each particular. However, a consideration of what this lawful relationship must be like introduces the worry that it would require some additional agency (for example, a supernatural agent).

Assuming the same outcomes of lawful events are repeatable, presumably, these laws could be applied numerous times over with the same result, as with my Nespresso VertuoLine. Assuming I am my soul that has a particularity that sufficiently supplies the metaphysical content of what I am, if I was produced from the underlying material it would seem to follow that I could be reproduced with the same conditions in place, which is problematic if I am a nonuniversal that was produced by physical laws.

However one understands the laws of nature, a problem occurs for the defender of MED. On a *determinist* understanding all events are causally necessitated by their preceding events, and, past, present, and future events are contained within one causally closed system. This would fit on what is often called the classical picture of the world in classical mechanics where the world is a machine. On the classical picture all particles are fixed as to their positions and the outcomes. Arguably, on an *indeterminist* understanding of the laws of nature (and given a quantum picture of the world), physical events occur in a way that is lawful not in the sense of being fixed but in the sense of being predictable with a certain probability.

First, let us look at the deterministic option. On the present view of souls, in a determined physical universe, this would entail that there would be over seven billion separate fundamental laws because there are over seven billion individual persons (and more to come!). It is not clear, though, that

14. This is something Hasker and other scientifically informed emergentists are willing to grant.

these laws would sufficiently explain who *I* am because that would be hidden from public view. Assuming these laws were in place, it does seem to follow, in fact, if I have a distinct particularity that sufficiently informs who *I* am that this lawful emergence would only occur once. If it is presumed that the same law could produce both Joshua on earth and twin-Joshua (with all the same perceptible properties) on another world then, in theory, a contradiction would ensue. More problematically, in a deterministic universe, there would need to be distinct laws for every individual, making the discovery of the laws highly unlikely, even if the lawful events occurred only once in the history of the world. One problem for this single occurrence that would arise is that we would never know for sure that this law created this person, aside from actually checking with the person herself. Furthermore, it is not clear that these are laws in any sense of the term, given the generalizable nature of laws. Hence, there is a problem for MED in a deterministic frame without some additional explanation.

Second if it is to allow the repeatability of products, an indeterminist option requires that physical parts lack the sort of particularity ascribed to the soul. It would seem most scientists presuppose in practice that physical particles along with complex objects lack the sort of particularity ascribed to souls, and philosophers of physics assume that physical particles lack this sort of particularity.¹⁵ The problem is that the present option disallows the kind of causality that is nonrepeatable, and that the products are discoverable, at least in principle. In other words, if an indeterminist process produces you once, it is logically impossible that it could do so twice, even if it were within the bounds of statistical possibility. My particularity, the fact that I have immediate insight to this one pure property (that is, subjective thisness), is determinate and could not be produced by a physical process in an indeterministic world.¹⁶ Thus, an indeterministic world of physical causes and effects fails to explain this fact about souls.

Thankfully there is an explanatory option that provides the resources for souls. Both the deterministic and indeterministic options are accommodated in theism. On the deterministic option God would, at the creation of the world, establish the laws that give rise to you. On the indeterministic option,

15. Steven French, "Identity and Individuality in Quantum Theory," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, accessed February 22, 2018, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2015/entries/qt-idind/>. The author makes it quite clear that there are nonhaecceitistic understandings and haecceitistic, but the latter are not like the primitive mental view offered here.

16. For a similar argument see Richard Swinburne, "The Argument from Souls to God," *Religious Studies* 51 (2015): esp. 303–5. I arrived at this argument independently from Swinburne, but he has helped me clarify it. Elsewhere, I work with the understanding of thisness, and concerns with rejecting it, advanced in the present article. See Joshua R. Farris, "Bodily-Constituted Persons, Soulful Persons, and the *Imago Dei*: The Problem from a Definite I," *Philosophy and Theology* 28 (2016): 455–68. Also see Joshua R. Farris, "Creational Problems for Soul-Emergence from Matter: Philosophical and Theological Concerns" (unpublished manuscript).

with the PC conditions in place, God simply acts by way of making determinate your particular soul.

With these points in mind, it is clear that creationism is a necessary condition for an emergent soul, and the sufficient condition for a soul's particularity, if the conditional is true. There is one viable response for the defender of MED who denies the primitive thisness view described above. She could understand the soul's thisness in a similar fashion to other physical products. On this understanding, souls are individuated by spatial location, and distinct complex arrangements of particles. A soul, in this case could inherit its unique structure from biology, but there is a cost here. It seems to me that my consciousness yields a distinction between *my* mental substance, which is a nonuniversal and a product of a nongeneralizable event, contrasted with material substances that exist as products from lawful events, which, themselves, are generalizable in nature. The defender of MED, then, would need to deny what seems most apparent to her own mind. It would also seem to follow that two perceptibly identical persons could be just that—identical, distinguished by their spatial occupations and the modal properties that follow.

Swinburnian Superiority to MED

We are left then with some version of creationist-souls. The challenge, as some have made quite clear, is that creationist versions of substance dualism lack the explanatory resources to make sense of animal-human continuity and a fine-grained dependence relation of mind-on-brain. But, one might question whether we should take these scientific assumptions as constraints on our philosophical theorizing.

It seems to me that we do have reason to take (perhaps tentatively) the scientific consensus on mind-brain relations as a constraint on our theorizing and so Hasker and Richard Swinburne are right to do so. First, one might take it that the sciences have served a corrective role on our theorizing in history.¹⁷ The overwhelming successes of the sciences in providing some profitable explanations have helped us better to describe the world as it seems to be. On the important issue of the mind-brain relationship, there is a growing consensus amongst scientists and many philosophers that matter has a tremendous amount of diversity and potential that was otherwise undetected in previous generations. It is this *growing potential* that has given philosophers additional resources from which to develop coherent explanations of the relationship between mind and brain. Second, the fine-grained dependence relation corroborates the scientific data with our commonsense experi-

17. I am not suggesting that we should allow the scientific consensus to constrain our theorizing in all cases, but it seems reasonable in this instance.

ences of mind and brain relations, where minds are functionally dependent on brains.¹⁸ Take for example my running into a door frame and hitting my head. If I run into it hard enough, I will surely find myself unconscious lying on the floor. The scientific data tells me that something occurs in the neurons, while commonsense tells me that what happens to my head intimately affects my mind.¹⁹

There is one creationist option that stands out as an option that appears to satisfy A1 and A2 given above. Richard Swinburne advances a more satisfying version of creationist-dualism that takes more seriously the findings of neuroscience and the data from biological evolution.²⁰ In this way, Swinburne has crafted a creationist alternative that begins to resemble MED, but it is not clear that his is a version of ESD in any robust sense, even if it allows for a finely-grained dependence relation (A2). The problem is that Swinburne's theory appears to be inconsistent in places.²¹ Inconsistent or not, there are some clear oddities that one would hope could be resolved.

In several places, Swinburne seems to suggest that souls can pop in and out of existence.²² Several related thought experiments are given from bodies sleeping and the severing of the corpus callosum, which he raises as conceivable possibilities for soul-cessation. On the latter thought experiment, it is suggested that the severing of the corpus callosum could bring about the emergence of a new soul.²³ For some this clearly seems unappealing, or worse, at odds with his creationism.²⁴ Swinburne's theory is arguably unappealing because it apparently presumes a messy origination process, where unique laws are required for each soul-body arrangement (see above). Despite such challenges, it seems to me there is a way to harmonize MED and creationism: combining them would make MED no longer MED, but another form of ESD.

18. This gives me reason for thinking that souls are natural kinds rather than relational souls, which, at least during embodiment, have certain constraints that souls might not have when disembodied.

19. Several other examples—like the event of bumping my knee and the communication that occurs between the knee, c-fibers in my brain, and the mental feeling of pain—yield the same point.

20. Richard Swinburne, *The Evolution of the Soul* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), esp. chap. 10.

21. Hasker, *The Emergent Self*, 161.

22. Swinburne, *The Evolution of the Soul*, 177. It is not clear that Swinburne is decisive on this point.

23. *Ibid.*, 197. Swinburne does raise this possibility, but, again, he is not definitive on this point. The tension could be resolved if one were, so to speak, to bring God's causal activity back into the physical process.

24. See once again Hasker, *The Emergent Self*, 161.

Emergent Creationism or Creationist Emergentism

One could conceive of an alternative ESD along the following lines. As the creator of souls, via the materially configured neural structure, God creates human bodies to have a lawlike or lawful relation to particular souls that he divinely intends to come about at a specified time. Divinely intending the actuality of the soul's particularity, then, is necessary to bringing about the existence of individual humans. God's bringing about *this* particular soul fulfills A3, but the *manner* in which the soul exists resembles MED. These two events are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for the origination of the human soul and so we have a theory that provides a natural explanatory ground for A1 and A2.²⁵ More can be said in order to add some additional analytic flesh on the theological bones of the soul. For a viable emergent relation between a body and a soul, we need to consider laws.

An emergent law would look something like the following: The determinable biological or physical conditions (BPC) are required for the general features of the *originating* mind (OM). At some specified time *t*, the BPC are met, and a law establishes the union of *this* mind to this brain. The emergent story does not end here because as shown above the BPC are insufficient for the OM. Another necessary condition is required for the individual OM.

The divine act (determinate) of providing the particularity is an additional necessary condition, and the sufficiency condition for the soul's particularity, for the OM. OM must have originators (or originating causes), namely, BPC and the Divine act. The sufficient conditions are met when the BPC meets the Divine act in the specified way.

What emerges is not simply a novel set of properties and powers (emergent 1b, where novel properties/powers emerge from the interaction of low-level properties of material things), but a novel substance that did not previously exist.²⁶ The present view, call it emergent creationism or creationist emergentism, is not simply emergent 1b with a novel law, but is a higher form of emergence, which requires the presence of Divine action.²⁷ In the end, the mind emerges in one of two ways: First, it emerges by the confluence of BPC with the uniquely established law for each individual (where this unique law is established by God or some other agent). Potentially, defenders of MED could endorse something like this option, but it seems that they would need to give more credence to Divine action as a causal explana-

25. As suggested above, it is not necessary that we portray God as somehow adding from the outside. See "Souls Beastly and Human," in *The Soul Hypothesis: Investigations into the Existence of the Soul*, ed. Mark C. Baker and Stewart Goetz (New York: Bloomsbury, 2011), 202–21.

26. I am following Hasker's use of Searle in *The Emergent Self*, 175–7.

27. For an account that expands the emergentist options found in Hasker and Searle, see J. P. Moreland, *Consciousness and the Existence of God: A Theistic Argument* (Routledge: New York, 2008), esp. 53–70.

tion in a soul's origination. There is another more obvious cost, however. The first option is, no doubt, unattractive because these sorts of laws go against well-attested theories of physical laws, so let us consider the second option. Second, it emerges by the confluence of BPC with the Divine injecting or imparting the particularity within the biological process. On this way of thinking, BPC is necessary for the emergence of souls (particularly human souls), but the Divine act is sufficient for a soul's particularity.

There remains a particularity problem for defenders of MED, which requires Divine creationism or some other supernatural agency. While I have offered a couple of ways forward for MED, it is not clear that MED would retain the 'mere' descriptor because some additional agency is present to or with lawful physical events. Furthermore, I have given reasons why these solutions are unsatisfactory. Some version of emergent substance dualism with creationism seems preferable. The view I have advanced should not be confused with alternative origin stories. According to this view, physical events are not manifestations of the Divine acting in a specified way, thus the view advanced here is not a version of Divine occasionalism. Neither is it the case that mentality exists in physical particles, excluding micropsychism. Additionally, the assumption is not that the BPC has within it the powers to produce the mind, which also excludes MED. Thus, we have a distinct origin story of the mental.²⁸

28. I would like to give a special thanks to the editors, Jon Loose and Angus Menuge, of this special issue for several suggestions they made to the article. Thanks also to the participants at an HBU Pantologia meeting, especially to Bruce Gordon for his passionate pushback. The article is much stronger for it.