

Substance Dualism and the Unity of Consciousness

Igor Gasparov

ABSTRACT In this paper I would like to defend three interconnected claims. The first stems from the fact that the definition of substance dualism recently proposed by Dean Zimmerman needs some essential adjustments in order to capture the genuine spirit of the doctrine. In this paper I will formulate the conditions for genuine substance dualism, as distinct from quasi-dualisms, and provide a definition for genuine substance dualism that I consider more appropriate than Zimmerman's. The second is that none of the currently proposed forms of substance dualism are able to provide a satisfactory account of conscious subjectivity. To support this claim I present two arguments, the first against Cartesian Dualism, the other against Emergent Dualism. The third, I believe, derives from the two just mentioned: if the dualistic arguments against the ability of physicalist theories to provide a sound account of the unity of the subject of consciousness are persuasive enough, then, in order to acquire a more adequate account of the unity of the conscious subject, we will have to look more closely at such forms of quasi-dualism as spiritualism or a broadly Aristotelian view of human persons.

KEYWORDS analytical theology; emergent dualism; metaphysics of mind; substance dualism; unity of consciousness

Some people hold that at least one of the contemporary forms of substance dualism is good enough to account for the fact of the unity of consciousness. In what follows I assume that there is actually such a fact, despite the apparent controversy about what, exactly, that fact might depend on. Evidently, there is more than one kind of unity of consciousness,¹ as well as more than just one sort of substance dualism.² For my purposes here, it will be sufficient to keep in mind that each time I am aware of something, it seems to me that I am the only subject of *my* awareness. This

fact should be distinguished from the fact that many objects are presented to me together, as if they are in a unified field of consciousness, or that I am normally co-conscious of things (like colors, shapes, smells, sounds, texture and so on) that reach me through many different sensory modalities. It is the first kind of unity of consciousness that I am interested in exploring here. I will call this the *oneness* or *singularity of the conscious subject* (SCS). It seems to me that every genuine substance dualist should be willing to acknowledge that SCS is something harder to account for by means of the materialist theory of human mind and / or personal identity than is the second kind of unity of consciousness. This is because it is very difficult to understand how the brain or the human nervous system, which are compounds that comprise more than one single particle, might themselves be a single conscious subject.

Everything looks different when we come to the second kind of unity of consciousness—co-consciousness—insofar as it is relatively easy to grasp it as a functional unity. With the help of an analogy, we may say that there is nothing mysterious about conceiving the fact that a group comprising more than one person is working on a *single* project, whereas it is very hard to accept the notion that a subject of consciousness is itself like a group of people engaged in some such thing.

Typically, it is at this moment that the substance dualist asserts that the only way to help the materialist extricate herself from her bad situation is to assume the existence of an immaterial thing—the soul—which will then furnish a source of metaphysical legitimation for the unity of consciousness, in the sense of SCS. This is because, on her view, the soul is a single thing: a genuine substance rather than something collective. Moreover, the soul is considered to be absolutely simple: that is, without any proper parts. Thus, the simplicity of the soul guarantees the unity of the conscious subject. This way of thinking seems to be a salient feature of any kind of substance dualism. As I said earlier, it is not the case that there is just one kind of substance dualism. Taking into consideration this obstacle, the nature of substance dualism needs some clarification and, indeed, some work has recently been done in this area. Dean Zimmerman deserves the most

1. Tim Bayne and David Chalmers, “What is the Unity of Consciousness?” in *The Unity of Consciousness: Binding, Integration and Dissociation*, ed. Axel Cleeremans (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 23–58.

2. For the latest dualist Manifestos, see Marc C. Baker and Stewart Goetz, eds., *The Soul Hypothesis: Investigations into the Existence of the Soul* (London, New York: Continuum, 2011); and Robert C. Koons and George Bealer, eds., *The Waning of Materialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

praise, for having promoted the idea that there is a variety of dualisms.³ But in my view his construal of what dualism is, and, especially, of what substance dualism is, is too inclusive: his concept of substance dualism includes some views that do not seem genuinely dualistic. In my paper I will firstly provide a more precise and, in my view, more adequate definition of substance dualism, before trying to demonstrate that none of the nowadays popular versions of substance dualism can account for the fact of the unity of consciousness in the sense of SCS.

1. A PROPER DEFINITION OF SUBSTANCE DUALISM

What is worth noticing first of all is that any sort of dualism amounts to a theory and, like any theory, dualism aims to provide an explanation of some subject matter or other. Thus, to be a dualist is, above all, to maintain a set of specific beliefs concerning the subject matter one seeks to explicate. Hence one may be a dualist about properties of concrete objects and believe that there are two different classes of properties, which can be differentiated thus: if the property belongs to one of the two classes it cannot belong to the other, and vice versa. Or, one can be a dualist about God and the created world. That would presumably amount to a belief that nothing that is God could be a created thing, and vice versa. However, these theories concern very different subject matters, which are *prima facie* quite independent of each other. If I am a dualist about God and the created world, I do not have any obligation to be a dualist about properties, insofar as this concerns the properties of created things. Here we should keep in mind that when talking about dualism it is important not to lose sight of what the dualism in question is about, and which part of reality is supposed to be explained by it.

At the highest level of generality, dualism could be defined as corresponding to any theory claiming that the best explanation of its subject matter is provided by the supposition of the existence of two mutually exclusive classes of items. Furthermore, any dualism should assign equal status to both of these classes in respect of its explanation of its subject matter. For example, if the subject matter in question is the human mind, then a substance dualist should be thought of as claiming that the hu-

3. Dean W. Zimmerman, "Dualism in the Philosophy of Mind," in *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Donald Borchert (New York: Thompson Gale, 2006), vol. 3, 113–122; Dean W. Zimmerman, "From Property Dualism to Substance Dualism," supplement. vol., *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 84 no. S (2010): S119–S50; Dean W. Zimmerman, "From Experience to Experienter", in Baker, *The Soul Hypothesis*, 168–196.

man mind is equally constituted by the material brain or nervous system, or some other material items, and by the immaterial soul. If, however, the soul is to count as “a substance”—whatever that may mean—then the brain should also be counted as “a substance.” In that case, we should take “substance” to possess equal explanatory status with respect to both. And since both items—the soul and the brain—are considered substances, we could say they enjoy equal status. Another example of this issue of status is furnished by “ontological independence.” Material and immaterial substances are often conceived by dualists as being ontologically independent of each other, where “ontological independence” of a “thing from another thing” means, roughly, “that a thing possibly exists when another thing does not.” I claim that in order to arrive at a genuine dualism we should hold that the items belonging to the two mutually exclusive classes postulated in the dualistic theory must have at least one such form of shared status.

Now let us apply these claims to the definition of dualism given by Dean Zimmerman.⁴ The subject matter of Zimmerman’s definition is the nature of human persons. There are, in his view, two competing answers to the question “What am I?” The first is materialism. Materialism, then, according to Zimmerman, is a theory that says that every human person is something that has only physical parts, or is entirely made out of ordinary physical stuff: that is, of the stuff out of which all other familiar physical things are made.⁵ Consequently, in his view, the second answer, dualism, is tantamount to a denial of materialism. According to Zimmerman, dualism says that every human person contains physical parts, and more: it claims that “there is more to a person than the body.”⁶ He writes:

Mind-body dualism is the doctrine that human persons are not made out of ordinary matter, at least, not entirely.⁷

Thus, he equates every denial of materialism with dualism—something that in my view should be considered false. I claim this because at the heart of every dualism (not just the Cartesian one) lies the idea that some area of reality receives its best explanation when we postulate the existence of two mutually exclusive classes of entities. But Zimmerman’s definition allows that only one class of entities—the souls—provides an adequate ex-

4. See Zimmerman, “Dualism in Philosophy of Mind”; and Zimmerman, “From Experience to Experiencer.”

5. Zimmerman, “From Experience to Experiencer,” 168.

6. *Ibid.*

7. Zimmerman, “Dualism in Philosophy of Mind,” 113.

planation of the nature of human persons. So, according to the view that Zimmerman calls “pure dualism,” I am strictly and exclusively identical with just one metaphysical entity, the immaterial soul, and not with the soul and the body, as “composite dualism” asserts.⁸ From my point of view, pure dualism would not then be dualism at all.⁹ This is because it posits only one kind of metaphysical entity—not two—to explain what a human person is. To the extent that Zimmerman’s “pure dualism” treats a human person as a pure spirit, it would be better to call this vision *spiritualism*, not dualism. Spiritualism is clearly a kind of monistic theory. As far as I can see, Plotinus, Leibniz and Berkeley, and perhaps also Pythagoras and

8. *Ibid.*, 115.

9. It may be objected to this that my picture of dualism stems from a misunderstanding of the Cartesian doctrine. (I owe this objection to an anonymous reviewer.) For it may be said that Descartes himself, as well as his followers, did not believe that the body is an essential part of the human person, and maintained that the identity of the human person consists exclusively in the identity of her soul, and not in the identity of her body. Once such a refinement of the Cartesian view is admitted, then my banishing of pure soul dualism from the family of genuine dualisms may seem unwarranted. To answer this objection we need to distinguish between the historical question “What exactly was Descartes’ view of human person?” and the logical-cum-semantic question “What is the possible range of coherent metaphysical answers to the question of what I am?” Let us first consider the former. It seems that Descartes, actually, oscillated between two views: the view that a person has two parts, an essential part—the soul, and a contingent part—the body; and the view that the person is simply the soul, and the body not a part of the person. Cf. Brian Smart, “How Can Persons Be Ascribed M-predicates,” in *Mind* 86, no. 341 (1977): 63–66. I am indebted to Richard Swinburne, both for alerting me to the source just cited and for formulating both of the views just ascribed to Descartes. A similar point may be found in Jonathan Bennett’s *Learning by Six Philosophers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), vol. I, 81–83. I don’t see the two different Cartesian views as incompatible each other, and neither do I view them as incompatible with Descartes’ being a genuine dualist, even if he would have inclined more towards the second formulation of his doctrine. I think that Descartes, when he says that the human person is just the soul, intended to say that my identity over time depends only upon the identity of my soul. In modern terms we would say that my identity over time is grounded in the soul alone. For example, to be identical with myself at two different times, I need not have the same body at those times. Nevertheless, Descartes also believed that the human person is a union of soul and body, not body alone. Thus, his answer to the question of what I am would be that I am a unique human person, i.e. the union of my soul and my body. Therefore, the Cartesian stance turns out to be one of genuine dualism, and not what I earlier called spiritualism. Be that as it may, my aim here is not to reconstruct Descartes’ historical view. What I am aiming at here is, rather, to construct a logico-conceptual space of possible answers to the question of what I am. And here we can clearly distinguish between two stances: firstly there is what I call spiritualism, which is the claim that I am identical to a soul, and secondly there is what I call Cartesian dualism, which is the claim that I am identical with a union of a body and a soul. They are clearly different.

Plato, have been the most well-known proponents of that view in Western philosophy.

Let us nevertheless return to the issue of dualism as it concerns the human person. The main idea of the doctrine, in my view, is that the best explanation for the nature of human persons consists in the postulation of two mutually exclusive classes of metaphysical entity, taken as constituting each and every human person. In the recent literature the distinction between property and substance dualism seems to have become a part of the current philosophical orthodoxy. Supporters of property dualism hold that the realm of natural properties comprises both physical and non-physical (mental) properties, and that each kind of property is equally fundamental. The proponents of this view are either silent about the existence of non-material substances, or go so far as to deny their existence. By contrast, adherents of substance dualism believe in the existence of both sorts of substance: i.e. physical and mental ones. Each sort of substance is deemed to enjoy a metaphysical status equal to that of the other. Usually, this status is described in terms of their exhibiting “ontological independence.” This idea is often expressed by saying that a mental substance (the soul) could exist independently of its physical counterpart (the body). Hence I shall hereon confine my discussion to the issue of substance dualism.

I intend to place only genuine substance dualisms, as distinct from quasi-substance-dualisms, within the category of substance dualism itself. Doctrines such as spiritualism, which, inasmuch as it concerns the nature of human persons, is a dualism in name only, should in my view be considered instances of quasi-substance-dualism. I would consider the accounts of human persons in the tradition of Aristotle and / or St. Thomas Aquinas, along with spiritualism, to rank amongst such “quasi-dualisms.”¹⁰ I would claim that these are not instances of genuine dualism, either. My reasons are as follows. Even if an Aristotelian account of human persons states that every human person is a compound of two items—the human soul which is the form of the human body and the human body which is the matter of the human being—neither of them is a full-fledged substance. Despite the fact that the Aristotelian soul—in virtue of its being a form—can be called “a substance,” the real substance, according to the Aristotelian account, is rather the human being itself.¹¹ Something roughly similar—but perhaps,

10. Brian Leftow, “Soul, Mind, and Brain,” in Koons, *The Waning of Materialism*, 395–415; Eleonore Stump, *Aquinas* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003).

11. Aristotle, *Met.*, H 1, 1042a 25–35; *De anima* 413a.

also, to a greater degree—holds true in the case of a Thomistic account of human persons.¹² In view of what has been said above, I would propose considering Aristotelian and / or Thomistic accounts of human persons as philosophical doctrines *sui generis*, or, at least, as forms of quasi-dualism, but not as genuine forms of substance dualism.

In the contemporary philosophical literature on the mind–body problem there are, in addition, a further group of dualistic accounts of mind resulting from collaborations between philosophers and those involved in empirical brain research. John Eccles’s dualist interactionism may serve as a good example of such an approach.¹³ Although it is quite evident that Eccles drew his philosophical inspiration partly from Cartesian sources, his account—even if very valuable on its own—cannot be, in my opinion, acknowledged as a case of genuine substance dualism. The main reason for this is that Eccles himself explicitly denies that the self enjoys the status of a substance. According to him, the self merely belongs to “a world” different from that of physical things.¹⁴ Another reason why Eccles’s account should be excluded from consideration in what follows is that his approach is rather empirical in its nature, and thus cannot be properly evaluated by means of the sort of a priori arguments I set out here.

Hence, in order to be a form of genuine substance dualism about human persons, a theory should meet the following conditions:

- A) It should be about one and the same area of reality—in our case the nature of the human, so that it provides a metaphysical answer to the question “What am I?”
- B) It should offer a hypothesis regarding the existence of two mutually exclusive classes of substance, as the best explanation of the nature of human persons.
- C) It should claim that substances of each kind enjoy equal metaphysical status.

Despite the restrictions I impose above, there remain a variety of substance dualisms. In the discussion that follows, after a short description of their main forms, I will be focusing on the question of whether any of

12. This very short exposition of what I call Aristotelian and / or Thomistic accounts of human persons is in no way intended as a “correct” interpretation of their respective authors. It is, rather, a general and very loose picture of how, in my view, some of their ideas show up in the context of contemporary debates concerning personal identity.

13. John C. Eccles, *How the Self Controls its Brain* (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 1994).

14. *Ibid.*, 38.

the nowadays popular variants of this position really can account for the fact of the unity of consciousness in the sense of SCS. Unfortunately, my answer will be negative. None of the genuine substance dualisms are able to explain the unity of consciousness in the sense we have in mind here. I will provide two arguments in support of my answer, each of which is a priori in character.

2. THE VARIETIES OF SUBSTANCE DUALISM

Two main species of substance dualism remain consistent with the restrictions just introduced: Cartesian dualism¹⁵ and emergent dualism.¹⁶ The latter version of substance dualism appears to have some advantages over Cartesianism, according to modern adherents of this metaphysical view. However, adherents of both positions are active within the milieu pertaining to contemporary metaphysics. The common feature of both doctrines is the postulation of the existence of two fundamental substances, which constitute a human person together—a physical and a mental one. The main difference between Cartesian and emergent dualisms lies in their understanding of how a mental substance, the soul, could be related to the laws of nature. Advocates of emergent substance dualism believe that the soul naturally—that is, in accordance with the laws of nature—emerges from an appropriately arranged and complex physical substance, which in the case of human beings could be plausibly identified with the brain or the nervous system. Supporters of Cartesian dualism are inclined to deny this: they believe that the human soul is God’s work, which needs a special act of divine will in order to come into existence.

In a recent paper, William Hasker offers some reasons for why an emergentist account of such a mental substance should be preferred over a Cartesian dualist one.¹⁷ I shall present his main arguments here. First of all, emergent substance dualism is better than its Cartesian counterpart when it comes to accommodating the fact that not only humans, but also higher

15. John Foster, *The Immaterial Self: A Defense of the Cartesian Dualist Conception of the Mind* (London; New York: Routledge, 1991); Richard Swinburne, “From Mental / Physical Identity to Substance Dualism,” in *Persons: Human and Divine*, ed. Peter van Inwagen and Dean Zimmerman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 142–64. For a modern reconstruction of Cartesian metaphysics see John Hawthorne, “Cartesian Dualism,” in Inwagen, *Persons: Human and Divine*, 87–98.

16. William Hasker, *The Emergent Self* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1999); William Hasker, “Persons as Emergent Substances,” in *Soul, Body, and Survival*, ed. Kevin Corcoran (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 107–119.

17. Hasker, “Persons as Emergent Substances,” 112.

animals, possess consciousness. Secondly, it is wholly consistent with the dependency investigated by science—of mental states upon brain states or, perhaps, upon physical states of the nervous system as a whole. As to the question of why one should be a substance dualist at all, Hasker, together with other proponents of this view, argues that a physicalist is not able to account for the evident fact of the unity of consciousness. The argument of today's other great advocate of emergent substance dualism, Dean Zimmerman, runs in much the same vein. He argues that both the materialist and the advocate of property dualism are in trouble, because they are both lacking any adequate subject for conscious experiences.¹⁸ Zimmerman's argument has many subtleties, but his main point is relatively straightforward: the unity of conscious experience requires an experiencer, and this must be a single thing in a very strong sense, such that no manifold whatever could ever fulfill this role. This line of thought has longstanding roots in the history of philosophy, reaching back at least to Leibniz, or even, we may presume, into antiquity. Roderick Chisholm's argument from *entia successiva* is the most immediate precursor of Zimmerman's argument from the vagueness of material objects.¹⁹

Cartesian dualism, on the other hand, though less popular nowadays, remains a possible alternative to physicalism, as well as to emergent dualism. From the point of view of the unity of consciousness its main advantage, in the eyes of its adherents, appears to be the simplicity of the Cartesian soul that, if it exists at all, permits no division within itself. Thus, for a modern Cartesian, the perfect simplicity of mental substance would seem to furnish a source of legitimation for claims concerning the unity of mental experience.

Either way, the thought that the unity of conscious experience requires the unity of the experiencer seems to play a crucial role in the considerations of contemporary dualists of any flavor. Here is some direct textual evidence for this:

Each of us knows that whatever is asking the question "What am I?" must be a single thing capable of exemplifying a plurality of psychological properties. Its unitary nature consists in the impossibility of its exhibiting a certain sort of "division of psychological labor."²⁰

18. Zimmerman, "From Property Dualism to Substance Dualism"; and "From Experience to Experiencer."

19. Dean W. Zimmerman, "Material People," in *The Oxford Handbook of Metaphysics*, ed. Michael J. Loux and Dean W. Zimmerman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 491–526.

20. Zimmerman, "From Experience to Experiencer," 170.

Call this the UNITY REQUIREMENT, and let us now formulate it in a more precise way as follows:

(UR) Only *one* single thing can be the subject of conscious experience.

This formulation must, however, be supplemented by a NON-VAGUENESS REQUIREMENT, which may be expressed as follows:

(NR) No vague entity can be the subject of conscious experience.

It seems that there is one more salient assumption. It is supposed that I am whatever thing it is that has all my conscious experiences.²¹ I shall call this the IDENTITY REQUIREMENT:

(IR) I am identical to whatever thing it is that has my conscious experiences.

All three requirements mentioned above may well be doubted. However, I shall take them for granted without any further argument, just because the advocates of substance dualism seem to presuppose them in their considerations about the nature of human persons.

3. CARTESIAN SUBSTANCE DUALISM AND THE UNITY OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Suppose that Cartesian dualism were true. According to this view, the unity of consciousness is grounded in the unity of the soul, which is supposed to be a unique and perfectly simple subject of mental experience. On the Cartesian account, however, I am not a pure soul, but a human person, which is “an intimate union” of the soul and the human body.²² Whatever such an “intimate union” might be like, it should be plain that I am not just one single thing, but a pair of things—one mental and the other physical. Jonathan Bennett puts the point very nicely:

21. Ibid.

22. Cf. René Descartes, *Principia Philosophiae*, 8.23. Giving an exact account of what the Cartesian union of soul and body amounts to, and how it is supposed to work, has proved to be a subject of considerable controversy, but nonetheless the fact remains that Descartes himself was insistent upon this point. In the *Synopsis to Meditations*, he writes: “the mind is proved to be really distinct from the body, but is shown, notwithstanding, to be so closely joined to it that the mind and the body make up a kind of unity.” René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy with Selections from Objections and Replies*, trans. and ed. John Cottingham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 7.15 [11].

Humans may seem to be thinking animals, Descartes held, but really each of us is a pair of things: an extended unthinking animal and an unextended thinking mind.²³

Thus, the truth of Cartesian dualism seems hardly consistent with the unity of consciousness. Here is the argument via a *reductio ad absurdum*:

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|-----|---|-------------------|
| (1) | I am identical to whatever thing it is that has my conscious experiences. | (IR) |
| (2) | I can be identical only to one single thing. | (UR, NR) |
| (3) | I am identical to a human person. ²⁴ | |
| (4) | If I exist, then there is a human person that has my conscious experiences. | (1, 3) |
| (5) | Any human person is identical to a pair of things. | Cartesian Dualism |
| (6) | I am identical to a pair of things. | (3, 4, 5) |
| (7) | A pair of things cannot be identical to one single thing of the same kind. | |
| (8) | I cannot be identical to myself, even if I exist. | (2, 6, 7) |

It could be said in defense of Cartesianism that I am essentially only my soul, not my body. Then, though, I either would not be identical to a human person, or a human person would not be a union of two substances. As far as I can see, neither of those conclusions could be acceptable to any genuine substance dualist.

Let us suppose that I am not identical to a human person. What, then, could I be identical to? I could be identical either to a pure immaterial soul or to a human animal that could in turn be thought of as either a physical body or a form-and-matter compound *à la* Aristotle. None of these alternatives is compatible with Cartesian dualism.

Roughly the same goes for the denial that a human person is a union of two substances, since this would amount to a denial of Cartesian substance dualism about human persons. There could, to be sure, be some plausible doubts about whether Descartes himself remained a true “Cartesian” as re-

23. Bennett, *Learning from Six Philosophers*, vol. I, 67.

24. By “a human person” I understand a human being in the entirety of its conscious experiences, including emotional feelings, reasonings, willings, and so on. Cartesianism, as I consider it here, tries to provide a metaphysical account of what it is to be a human person by claiming that a human person is an intimate union of two substances: soul and body. Thus it is, in my view, perfectly natural to say that I am identical to a human person, since the human person is the very reality Cartesian dualism aims to explain.

guards this question, but that is an appropriate subject matter for historical rather than metaphysical investigation.

And yet there remains one more possibility for those seeing to block my argument. Someone can deny (7). I admit that it is a viable option in principle, but not for a substance dualist, who will usually consider the substances to be concrete particulars located at the same fundamental level of reality.

I am therefore led to conclude that the Cartesian account of human persons cannot support the fact of the unity of consciousness in the sense of SCS, as long as it remains truly dualistic.

4. EMERGENT SUBSTANCE DUALISM AND THE UNITY OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Emergent substance dualism enjoys more popularity amongst present day dualists than does its Cartesian counterpart. Adherents to this doctrine see as its main advantage its greater alignment with contemporary science. According to William Hasker, one of the fathers of modern emergent dualism, the greatest problem of traditional substance dualism consists in its lack of credibility when considered from the standpoint of the modern scientific worldview. In particular, we cannot now sincerely believe that higher animals do not have conscious experiences. According to Descartes, however, they just do not have them. Why not? Because, according to the Cartesian view, God personally creates every soul, and He does not care to fashion them for any of his creatures except human beings. Hence in Cartesian nature there are no laws governing the emergence of the conscious subjects necessary for the unity of consciousness. Only God is able to produce a soul, not nature. We may naturally wonder what the obstacle is that impedes God from creating souls not only for humans, but also for other animals, plants or whatever He likes. Advocates of emergent dualism, however, wish to ensure that His role is not sullied with too much "tinkering."²⁵ According to their point of view, it would be better if God created some laws of emergence governing how souls arise out of physical matter. This is the main innovation of emergent substance dualism, and in the eyes of its proponents it is its main advantage, too. I claim, however, that if I am supposed to be a non-vague thing, then just this point will prove to be precisely the Achilles' heel of any such theory, at least when evaluated from the standpoint of SCS.

Why must the souls called for here be natural, but also immaterial? The

25. Zimmerman, "From Experience to Experiencer," 175.

emergent dualist answers thus: they should be a natural item in order that the dualistic worldview attains more credibility relative to all of the scientific facts as known today, and they should be immaterial as well, since only an immaterial soul can furnish a fitting candidate for being the single subject of conscious experiences. So why is it that no physical objects can do that job? One proposed answer is this: because ordinary physical objects, in the sense of such things as tables, trees, brains, nervous systems and animal bodies (organisms), are all vague objects.²⁶ Unfortunately, it is precisely just such ordinary physical objects as animal organisms, brains or their parts, and nervous systems that furnish the most plausible materialist candidates for being the subject of conscious experiences, and, consequently, the best candidates for being me. Since no vague object can be the single subject of conscious experiences, no ordinary physical object can be such a subject. Therefore, I cannot be identical to any ordinary physical object, such as my brain, etc. Such considerations oblige the materialist to search for some other candidates for being me, which are much less plausible than those mentioned above. If, for present purposes, we permit her to follow that path, and also suppose that these considerations offered by emergent dualists are correct, and their own statements true, then we may ask whether the truth of emergent substance dualism would, in fact, provide us with a single subject of conscious experiences? I claim that it would *not*. Emergent substance dualism takes onto itself all those problems pertaining to the duality (non-singularity) of the human person as a subject of conscious experiences already familiar to us from Cartesian dualism, while also acquiring some new ones specific to itself.

Suppose that emergent substance dualism were true, and that I am undergoing a conscious experience. Since all ordinary physical objects are vague, I am encompassed by a thick cloud of them. Many human brains, nervous systems, bodies surround me, and each produces, by nomological necessity, an immaterial substance, so that I am also surrounded by a host of souls. But which one amongst them is me? This question is by no means easy to answer. At least, it is certainly no more straightforward than the similar question posed to the materialist by the emergent dualist. If, however, we recall the NON-VAGUENESS REQUIREMENT, according to which the subject of conscious experience cannot be a vague object, we can realize straightaway that the question must be dropped from the agenda. Maybe, it should go along with emergent substance dualism itself, because in respect of vagueness this is in no respects superior to so called “garden va-

26. *Ibid.*, 174.

riety materialism.” Indeed, it does seem that the determinate uniqueness of my soul can only be saved if God “tinkers” with it personally. This is because no vague object seems able to produce something determinate, even on the basis of natural laws. Indeed, quite the opposite seems true, in that what the emergent dualist considers the greatest advantage of her theory turns out to be its greatest pitfall. A plurality creates some other plurality, not a desirable unity. We must therefore conclude that emergent substance dualism is far less well positioned to account for the unity of consciousness than even its Cartesian counterpart.

5. CONCLUSION

Summing all this up, my conclusion runs as follows: taking for granted the notion that I am identical to a single determinate (non-vague) human person, whose existence is necessary for a solid metaphysical basis for the unity of my conscious experiences, genuine substance dualism, properly defined, is not able to support an adequate theoretical explanation of the unity of the conscious experiencer. I believe that adherents of modern substance dualism have provided some of the most compelling reasons for denying the physicalist accounts of human persons that are so popular today. Their own doctrines, though, suffer from the substantial drawbacks pointed out here, and at this time I do not see any good remedy for them. In my view, we would have better prospects for acquiring a sound metaphysical account of the single subject of conscious experience if we were to turn our gaze instead towards a broadly Aristotelian doctrine, or maybe even a spiritualist alternative.²⁷

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27. I am grateful to Richard Swinburne, Dean Zimmerman, and Marcin Podbielski, as well as to two anonymous reviewers for their helpful and encouraging comments.

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