

## Pure or Compound Dualism? Considering Afresh the Prospects of Pure Substance Dualism

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### ABSTRACT

Substance dualism has received much attention from philosophers and theologians in contemporary literature. Whilst it may have been fashionable in the recent past to dismiss substance dualism as an unviable and academically absurd position to hold, this is no longer the case. My contention is not so much the merits of substance dualism in general, but a more specified variation of substance dualism. My specific contribution to the literature in this article is that I argue for the viability of pure substance dualism as a more satisfactory option in contrast to compound or composite varieties of substance dualism. I put forth one argument and tease out the implications that make compound dualism less than satisfactory. I conclude that, minimally, more work is required on compound variations of dualism to make it a more appealing and a philosophically satisfactory option.

### KEYWORDS

I-concept, soul, substance dualism, pure, compound

As of late, there has been a renaissance in the contemporary literature exploring substance dualism as a viable philosophical anthropology.<sup>1</sup> Given the recent discussion, it is simply not responsible to dismiss substance dualism as it has been fashionable to do in the recent past.<sup>2</sup> My contention here is not so much

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<sup>1</sup> See the following: FOSTER 1991; ROBINSON 2011; SWINBURNE 1997; GOETZ and TALIAFERRO 2011; CORCORAN 2001; INWAGEN and ZIMMERMAN 2007; BAKER and GOETZ 2011; TALIAFERRO 1994; TALIAFERRO 2013; MORELAND 2000; LOWE 2001; SMYTHIES and BELOFF 1989.

<sup>2</sup> This may be due in part to an uncritical assumption that Hume's writings on causation have ruled out theism and the possibility of causal interaction between immaterial and

with the merits of substance dualism in general, but the merits of a particular brand of substance dualism known as pure substance dualism (hereafter PSD) in contrast to composite/compound substance dualism (hereafter COSD). PSD is the view that I am strictly and essentially identified with my soul/ mind. COSD is the view that I am somehow comprised of both body and soul.<sup>3</sup> I put forward a fresh argument comprised of a set of arguments in favour of PSD as a more satisfying and cogent position in contrast to COSD primarily based on intuitive knowledge concerning the self that is definite and clear.<sup>4</sup>

### THE I-CONCEPT AS PERSPICUOUS AND DEFINITE IN NATURE

I discuss the first-person perspective or first-person knowledge as a ground for motivating the discussion. I believe this offers some support and semblance of meaning as to what the soul is by nature.<sup>5</sup> The first-person perspective is characteristic of persons that is, arguably, not shareable with other distinct individual objects. In fact, no two persons share the exact same conscious perspectives. The first-person perspective is deeply subjective in contrast to the third-person perspective. When contrasting the first-person perspective with third-person knowledge, there is a massive dissimilarity. One is describable or reducible to scientific processes, and the other is describable only in terms of something contrary to scientific processes. The first-person perspective is not reducible to or describable in terms of material events. First-person knowledge is characteristically deeply subjective, internal, introspectively accessible and in some modest sense private in contrast to third-person knowledge, which is public and external. I suggest that this comprises, in part, our understanding of the I-concept or soul-concept. This provides us with some content for understanding what the soul is and provides a foundation for considering afresh the prospects of PSD in contrast to other varieties of substance dualism.<sup>6</sup>

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material entities. Largely motivating the dismissal of dualism has come from Gilbert Ryle. See RYLE 1949: 18.

<sup>3</sup> At times, this is rather vague in the literature.

<sup>4</sup> Many of the arguments to follow in favour of PSD could, potentially, be re-articulated in favour of a strict Immaterialism. Immaterialism, as a global metaphysic, would be the notion that all objects are immaterial in nature. See the first two chapters in: INWAGEN and ZIMMERMAN 2007. Cf. FOSTER 1991.

<sup>5</sup> See CHALMERS 2004. Here Chalmers notes the difficulties of such a project and its limits in terms of correlation studies. Cf. GULLICK 1992; JACKSON 1998.

<sup>6</sup> See Chisholm for help on these matters of 'internalism' and introspective access to the self. CHISHOLM 1976; CHISHOLM 1981; CHISHOLM 1986.

## THE I-OR SOUL-CONCEPT AND THE PROSPECTS OF COMPOSITE/COMPOUND DUALISM

For the purposes of clarifying the intuitions given above concerning the soul-concept, I assume a modal situation wherein souls persist from somatic death into a disembodied state. I will begin with some of the solutions or options for the compound dualist in accounting for the person's persistence from embodiment to disembodied existence.<sup>7</sup> The first option I will call the literal compound dualist view. The second option I will call the property or event compound dualist view. The third option I will call the tertiary-thing or transcendent compound dualist view.

The first option accounting for the modal scenario above is called the literal compound dualist view. As argued above concerning our knowledge of persons, if I am literally both concrete-parts, body and soul, then I am literally one thing and two things. If I am literally one thing and two things, then the I-concept contradicts itself because I would no longer be the thing that persists through all of my mental states. The Logic of Identity is undermined by the fact of a thing being one and two things at the same time. This becomes especially clear in the case of a person persisting from a state of embodiment to a state of being separated from the body.<sup>8</sup> If I am literally both body and soul, then either I would cease to exist apart from the body or I would exist in part. Both supply problems for the compound dualist, which I do not think he would be willing to accept upon clear reflection of the solutions. For if I were not able to exist due to losing a concrete-part of myself, then the principal reason for accepting this modal situation is undermined by the fact that even if the soul persists it is not I that persists, but the soul-part that previously composed me.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the compound dualist assumes an incoherent notion of persistence and his modal

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<sup>7</sup> This assumes the notion of 'presentism'. See MARKOSIAN 2006. For a refutation of this concept of the 'I', see JOHNSTON 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. NOONAN 2011. This is a useful canvassing of the issues surrounding 'identity'. See especially the section entitled 'Criteria of identity'. Particularly, for the discussion concerning on 'personal identity' see SHOEMAKER 2009; SWINBURNE 1997; SWINBURNE 1998.

<sup>9</sup> It might be argued that composition and constitution are distinct from identity and that persons can persist from embodiment to disembodiment. Such that when the body and soul are united, they are literally one in virtue of the soul spatially being in the body. When the soul is separated from the body at death, then the person transfers from supervening on both body and soul to the soul. This is rather odd. First, this construal may work with other construals of compound dualism, such as the options I put forward below. Second, it is odd to say that once originally constituted a person could become constituted by something else. On the other hand, the person could be tied to the body contingently, such that the person is literally in the body during the state of embodiment and later disembodied the person is still the same. This still seems more naturally a form of pure substance dualism.

intuitions about the conceivability of the person's persistence from embodiment to disembodiment is undermined by a confused and illogical conception of personal identity. The soul that is persisting is not the same 'I' that is persisting. The other solution is to accept the notion that 'I' is a partitive notion within personal identity. Thus, literally I am partially myself when the part-soul detaches from the body. I hardly believe most substance dualists are willing to affirm this conclusion.<sup>10</sup> To do so would mean accepting a philosophically confused conception of persons that loses the virtues characteristically assumed with substance dualism, thus further undermining the I-concept as it was argued for above. This then seems an unlikely option for the defender of COSD.

The second option or solution is called the property or event view of compound dualism. I argue that it suffers from a diminished conception of personal identity and an indefinite I-concept similar to that of physicalists. The situation is similar whether I am a property or an event. As a property or an event, somehow I supervene on the composite of body and soul. First, I am not at this point literally body or soul but the thing or property that emerges from or minimally supervenes on the body and soul. Second, if I am a property or event that supervenes on the body/soul composite, then I could not transfer from embodied existence to disembodied existence. To do so would mean my transferring from the compound to the single soul as substance. This seems problematic in the simple fact that it is both body and soul that composes me. It seems unlikely that a property/event could persist in this manner without the appropriate base. If the property/event emerged or surfaced by supervening on the composite of body and soul, then the property/event would seem to require the body and soul composite for persistence. Third, an event lacks the persistence conditions presupposed with the I-concept. An event is a state of affairs, and states of affairs require specified conditions for a particular event to obtain. In this case, the conditions seem to include the interaction between soul and body, so much the worse for the defender of this construal of COSD. This solution is unpromising.

The third option or solution is called the transcendental view of COSD. On this view, often ascribed to Immanuel Kant, the 'I' is necessarily in space, yet transcends space. There is an enduring 'I' with self-ascription who necessarily transcends object confinement yet is conscious of objects, thus there is a body to which persons ascribe personhood.<sup>11</sup> As stated above, the notion is that I am something other than body and soul, yet I am somehow composed of body and soul.<sup>12</sup> The objection to this view is the I-know-not-what objec-

<sup>10</sup> Although, some are willing to affirm this. Robert Pasnau affirms that personal identity is degreed in nature in *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature* (PASNAU 2002: 389).

<sup>11</sup> For a recent exposition of this view see HAAG 2010: 127–143.

<sup>12</sup> Alternatively, it is a body to which one ascribes personhood. From this view or a variation of it, one could draw from the recent literature on constitution in contrast to identity.

tion that undermines the I-concept that we seem to have intuitively. Instead of having some clarity over the notion 'I', I have an inaccessible 'I' that falls into an abyss of deep scepticism or pure agnosticism. On this view, then, concepts concerning personal identity are out of reach and closed to the contender of COSD. Potentially, this variation of COSD faces something worse than is found in 'mysterian' physicalism. With 'mysterian' physicalism, the 'I' and concepts from consciousness become cognitively closed due to the physical law of causal closure.<sup>13</sup> In this circumstance, the 'I' is closed not by some principle that offers some explanation of the natural physical world of physical causes and effects, but by a pure agnosticism regarding the 'I' and its mental states. This is worse than physicalism, arguably, and undermines the attempt to draw some content on the notion of the self/person from the thought-experiment.

The defender of COSD could deny the conceivability of the person's disembodied survival. Motivations for denial might include the idea that he does not wish to affirm the awkward implications this would entail for his notion of survival or the possibility that personal survival in a disembodied state is literally incoherent on his view. I believe this response is undesirable. First, it denies one of the principal and traditional reasons for accepting substance dualism.<sup>14</sup> Second, concerning those who are also religiously motivated it denies the legitimacy of theology as a source of knowledge, which is a reason for accepting substance dualism for accounting for the religious notion relating to disembodied survival. Third, it comes seductively close to motivating other denials, such as the denial of the simplicity of the self, which for many defenders of substance dualism is not a debatable issue. To deny the soul's survival because of the loss of the part-body is to affirm the notion of the complex or composite person. One, then, would seem to affirm, implicitly, the denial of soul simplicity. The notion that the self is simple and tied to the I-concept, as argued for above. To deny this would in effect be to affirm the complexity of the person. This is to deny an important virtue of substance dualism. Given the ambiguity with COSD, I suggest that proponents of substance dualism re-consider pure dualism and seek to reconcile the tensions it may have with the findings of the empirical

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For a useful development of the 'constitution' criterion see BAKER 2000. Baker is defending a variation of materialism by utilizing the 'constitution' criterion in contrast to personal identity, but one could flush this out as a variation of substance dualism. Cf. CORCORAN 2006.

<sup>13</sup> See MCGINN 1999. Colin McGinn offers a treatment of 'mysterianism' that has gained popularity among materialists regarding consciousness.

<sup>14</sup> Hossack points out that one of the principal motivations for accepting substance dualism is because of ethics and philosophy of religion, not metaphysical reasons (HOSSACK 2007: 196). I think this is partly true, but as I show here, there are massive metaphysical and epistemological benefits to substance dualism: consider intentionality, public and private knowledge, etc. It is certainly not limited to those religiously motivated. Cf. HART 1988: 7.

sciences.<sup>15</sup> Alternatively, one could accept physicalism and the vagueness of concepts found within its framework,<sup>16</sup> thereby rejecting the benefits of the definite soul-concept both philosophically and theologically, and rejecting the notion of disembodied survival; for the physicalist has no bone to pick with disembodied survival.

## PARSIMONY AND SUBSTANCE DUALISM

Substance dualists generally recognize the fact that cognition, thinking and related activity is an activity of the mind and is inexplicable in terms of the physical. Given this and what is argued above, is it not simpler and more sensible to affirm a version of substance dualism that can account for the definite I-concept without ambiguity? It seems so. Compound dualism, in all the variations listed above, lends itself to ambiguity of the self and/or requires a *tertium quid*. On PSD, the soul/mind is just the person that is tightly and intimately connected to the body yet without confusion or mixture.<sup>17</sup> The defender of PSD assumes the naturalness of the soul having the capacity for activity beyond that seen in physical nature. Further, the proponent of PSD has the resources to account for the functional integration of the body and soul when the soul is embodied. Arguably, the body when interactive with the soul gives the soul new powers and capabilities, but this is not the same as affirming the person is a soul plus body. The proponent of PSD identifies persons with souls. Therefore, PSD is a simpler theory when offering a metaphysical explanation for persons, the operation of thinking, and it has greater clarity as a position in contrast to COSD.

Having said this, there may be a way to offer a view that is somewhere between PSD and COSD. This would require the defender of COSD to do two things. First, the defender needs to establish that the body is a contingent part of the person as a soul substance. This means that the body is contingently related

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<sup>15</sup> The only real difficulty for pure dualism is the notion of fine-grained dependence of mind on brain, but even this hardly seems like a knock-down argument against pure dualism because of the state of science and its fluctuating conclusions, our lack of a theory over the brain and mind relation and to what degree the mind depends on the brain.

<sup>16</sup> One could possibly accept the constitution theory of persons, property dualism or emergent dualism. All of these views have similar benefits found in substance dualism, yet lack the plausibility of a persisting self to account for conscious mental states; thus, a reason for accepting substance dualism. I consider these views to be broadly physicalist in nature. Emergent substance dualism is a debatable version of physicalism. In this view the brain somehow produces the mind. The mind is literally a product of the brain in the natural world of event-occurrences. Cf. BAKER 2000. Also see CORCORAN 2001; CORCORAN 2006.

<sup>17</sup> Someone may object to the notion that PSD could have this tight of a connection. I would offer, that apart from ontological identity, the defender of PSD could affirm a phenomenological and functional unity to the extent that soul and body act as one. I do not see why this is a problem.

to the soul and fills out a larger view of the person like a compound structure.<sup>18</sup> Hence, the body does not comprise the person in any literal or essential sense but becomes a part of the soul just as a metal bar becomes an extension to an already existing building structure. Second, and more difficult, the defender needs to provide a reason for thinking that the body is actually a part of the soul when the soul is embodied. It is not unnatural to perceive the soul as exemplifying properties that exclude properties instantiated by physical things. The two are foundationally and fundamentally different, so providing a reason for thinking that the body is contingently a part of the soul is rather difficult. It is one thing to say that the body becomes a part like a compound structure, but why should anyone think this is the case. There is neither a natural nor an intuitive reason for thinking this is the case. If one merely asserts that it is the case, then one hardly has any conceptual clarity beyond that of a pure variety of substance dualism.<sup>19</sup> This question is distinct from the question as to whether or not souls causally interact with bodies. Whilst we may not have an explanation of how this is so, we know it is so in terms of our phenomenological experiences. The more important question is the question of union. Why should I think that I am literally united to the body that I inhabit and use? This question deserves further reflection in the contemporary literature.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, this is deserving of further consideration in another context. My conclusion here is that there are fresh and responsible reasons for affirming a pure variety of substance dualism given what emerges in the contemporary literature on substance dualism.

## CONCLUSION

As radical as it may sound in a day where materialism dominates the academy, I offer PSD as having several benefits that distinguish it from other varieties of substance dualism. Maximally, I have shown COSD incoherent. Minimally, I have shown COSD to lack some important clarity. Either way, the defender

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<sup>18</sup> Richard Swinburne provides a similar explanation when he discusses the relationship between the body and soul as a compound structure (SWINBURNE 1997). Also cf. SWINBURNE 2007: 162–163, especially footnote 24. Cf. GOETZ and TALIAFERRO 2011.

<sup>19</sup> It may be that there are differing kinds of PSD wherein some variations have little use for the body, and others see the neural structure as teleologically related to the soul and the functional implementation of the soul.

<sup>20</sup> I believe Eric T. Olson has made a persuasive case for the lack of clarity on how this is so and why one should think the body is a part (OLSON 2001). This is true of Swinburne's explanation, as shown above. Charles Taliaferro offers some interesting thoughts wherein the union between the soul and body is often spoken of in terms of a functional or phenomenological unity, and while this is important for substantiating the value of the body, I am not sure that it gains much purchase on the ontic union of body and soul. See TALIAFERRO 2013: 46–59. Something along these lines needs further explication.

of COSD has more work to do on the matter of clarifying the relational union of both body and soul.

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