

Jonathan J. Loose, Angus J. L. Menuge, and J. P. Moreland, eds. *The Blackwell Companion to Substance Dualism*. Blackwell Companions to Philosophy. Oxford, Wiley Blackwell: 2018. xiv+511 pp. \$156.99 (hbk); \$195 (paper).

Martine C. L. Oldhoff
Protestant Theological University, Amsterdam

The Blackwell Companion to Substance Dualism is a witness to the fact that substance dualism remains a subject of philosophical interest even though it is a minority position within the philosophy of mind, where some sort of physicalism is the dominant point of view. Yet philosophers, frequently with Christian commitments, have rediscovered dualism for its ability to do justice to the reality of the subject or the self, phenomenal consciousness, and personal identity. Nevertheless, substance dualism often is overlooked and not considered seriously by, for example, theologians engaged with theological anthropology. Thus, this volume aims to gain attention for the dualist position and its benefits in philosophy as well as theology. The target audience is broad: scholars in philosophy of mind, psychology, and theological anthropology (11). Its aim, as the introduction makes clear, is to provide a positive and constructive case for substance dualism rather than an apologetic. The editors present the history of physicalism as resulting in the failure of materialist accounts of the human person, demanding a reconsideration of the soul (9). The editors label the renewed interest in the soul “the return of the subject” (by which they mean “the self”) (1, 3, 9). Furthermore, so the editors hope, if the star of dualism rises, then the superiority of theism above naturalism may become evident (10).

The book consists of 32 chapters, of which 30 are divided into three major sections that respectively (1) argue for and against a particular kind of substance dualism, (2) argue for and against alternatives to substance dualism, and (3) concern biblical anthropology, the incarnation, and the resurrection. An extensive index closes the volume. The editors characterize the structure of the *Companion* as “debate-style” (5, 11) that allows for a comparison between the presented positions. Given the vastness of this reference work, I will go through the sections and their chapters briefly, providing remarks on the contents of the chapters as I proceed. After that, I offer some appraisals regarding the *Companion* as a whole.

After the “Introduction”, the sectionless part of the volume continues with a surprising chapter by William Lycan, a materialist who argues that both materialism and substance dualism suffer from a lack of good arguments and that property dualism is less plausible than substance dualism. He touches upon several pivotal methodological points in the debate on the nature of the mental subject. The dualist understands, for example, pain as that which presents itself to the consciousness as a first-person experience of pain; that there

is something it is like to be in pain. But, so goes the argument, physical states do not admit of these sorts of first-personal facts. So, pain is not a physical state. The dualist takes the first-person perspective as authoritative, in contrast to the materialist who starts with a third-person perspective (24).

Does Lycan succeed in entering the perspective of the dualist? His contention that dualist arguments are generally deductive and that “[...] dualists do not think of either Cartesian egos or immaterial properties as explanatory posits” (30) causes doubt. The desire to account for the first-person perspective, the accompanying phenomenal consciousness and therefore the reality of the subject, means that the dualist is wanting also to hold substance dualism and property dualism on explanatory grounds. It is paramount whether someone finds it probable or improbable that there is spiritual or mental reality in addition to physical reality. This matter of worldview influences one’s position vis-à-vis dualism significantly.

In Part I of the *Companion*, “Articulating Substance Dualism”, four out of the fourteen contributors are critical of the ontological reality of the spiritual or mental. For example, Ian Ravenscroft underscores the fact that dualists and non-dualists have different concerns, influenced by their view of reality. In his essay that closes this first part, “Why reject Substance Dualism?” he argues that substance dualism hardly is a theory because it fails to explain, among other things, reasoning and perception. Dualists merely assert that the immaterial mind does these things. The reader can observe that dualists have a different understanding of what is to be explained: the reality of the mental, the unity of consciousness, phenomenal consciousness, and the like.

The first essay of part I is an introductory essay on substance dualism by Charles Taliaferro. Subsequently, the reader finds two introductory chapters for and against emergent dualism, written by William Hasker and Brandon Rickabough respectively. In the subpart on Thomistic dualism, Edward Feser provides a fine and accessible introduction to and defense of Aquinas’ understanding of the soul, followed by J.P. Moreland’s defense of ‘Thomistic-like dualism.’ William Hasker’s criticism of Thomistic Dualism takes its starting point from an exposition of Aquinas’ view by Eleonore Stump rather than Feser’s work. Next, Richard Swinburne, Jaegwon Kim and E. J. Lowe discuss Cartesian dualism. Swinburne provides a concise and excellent introduction to his position that is an accessible introduction to his *Mind, Brain, and Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). Kim’s chapter is an adapted version of a chapter from the third edition of his book *Philosophy of Mind* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2010). However, Kim never refers to Swinburne’s work. This is problematic, or at least less helpful than it could have been, given the supposed debate-style structure of the book. E.J. Lowe’s contribution, “Non-Cartesian Dualism,” is a fully republished chapter,¹ which is understandable given the fact that he passed away some years ago. Furthermore, it is an essay worth reprinting in this volume, because it contains a well-argued case for holistic dualism, that, like Swinburne’s essay demonstrates originality and metaphysical vigor.

For those who desire less introductory material, the last two sub-sections of Part I may be satisfying. The first contains J. P. Moreland’s detailed exposition of the unity of consciousness argument for substance dualism and a rebuttal by Tim Bayne. The last subpart consists of an academic treatment of ‘popular’ evidence for substance dualism: near-death

¹ From *After Physicalism*, 48-71, edited by B. P. Gocke (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012).

experiences (NDE). Gary R. Habermas and Michael N. Marsh disagree on the purported evidence of these experiences for a conscious human self, or substance dualism. Habermas thinks NDEs indicate that an immaterial soul functions after the cessation of measurable brain or heart function. Marsh seeks plausible explanations for the NDEs within the confines of materialist monism.

Part II is devoted to alternatives to substance dualism and commences with a chapter by Kevin Corcoran titled “Why Should a Christian Embrace Materialism (about Human Persons)?”. Interestingly, this title suggests that the audience of this *Companion*, or at least this contribution, consists of Christians. Corcoran distances himself from physicalism, and briefly introduces his metaphysical theory of constitutionalism. He tackles the hard problem of consciousness by downplaying it: we can uncover “[...] the physical grounds of first-person, subjective experiences, but we’re never saying *how* these physical grounds (i.e. mechanisms or structures) are paired with those particular phenomenal features of a conscious experience” (294). According to Corcoran, physicalism about human persons that desires to reductively explain subjectivity might be a failure, but materialism that accepts the explanatory gap is not. Corcoran’s contribution highlights that the defenders of various positions have diverse explanatory interests.

The rest of Part II consists of chapters on animalism, nonreductive physicalism, constitutionalism, and emergent individualism. Eric T. Olson, an animalist, argues that we are material things of a specific species: homo sapiens. He contends that this is an argument based on our senses, instead of a priori reasons: “Why suppose that we are animals? Well, that’s how it appears” (298). Stewart Goetz replies that we are only accidentally, not essentially, animals and argues for a dualist position on the human person. He problematizes Olson’s complex view of personal identity and suggests that a simple view of personal identity,² as found in substance dualism, as a better explanation of our persistence through time.

Nancey C. Murphy’s essay on nonreductive physicalism is particularly interesting because of her introductory critical remarks: “The structure of the book appears to represent a concept of philosophy that has increasingly been called into question during the past half-century” (317). She criticizes the separation of philosophy, theology, and science based on concepts. In her view, which one may label “Quineian holism,”³ philosophy cannot be neatly distinguished from the empirical sciences. She rejects conceptual analysis and proposes “conceptual archaeology” instead, which entails the “specification of the who and when of a concept’s employment” (318). For Murphy, concepts belong to paradigms and paradigms change as empirical sciences and culture change. In a footnote, the editors agree with her

² These are technical terms that categorize personal identity views. Derek Parfit introduced a distinction between simple and complex views of personal identity and associates the former with the non-reductionist tradition, the latter with the reductionist tradition (D. Parfit, “Personal Identity and Rationality”, *Synthese* 53, Nr. 2 (1982): 227). Philosophers arguing for a complex view maintain that one can analyze personal identity in terms of degrees of continuity of matter and/or properties because the identity of persons is similar to that of other complex persisting objects such as houses. That means that personal identity is only analyzable in terms of other things. The simple view posits a simple ‘I’ as a separate feature of the world, irreducible to other features.

³ N.C. Murphy, *Beyond Liberalism and Fundamentalism: How Modern and Postmodern Philosophy Set the Theological Agenda*, The Rockwell Lecture Series (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1996).

criticism on the structure of the volume and admit that the original plan included a section on the findings in neuroscience and other sciences and their relevance on the debate between substance dualists and opponents (326). Murphy's methodological criticism that arises from her pragmatic stance in philosophy distinguishes her from the majority of scholars in this *Companion* that embraces conceptual analysis. One wonders whether the editors take her criticism seriously. Case in point: the subsequent chapter, Joshua Rasmussen's "Against Nonreductive physicalism," is a thoroughly conceptual piece of writing that shows no sensitivity to Murphy's criticism whatsoever. He argues that mental properties are not physical and that they cannot be grounded in physical properties. Thus, all ('standard') forms of physicalism are false.

The late Lynne Rudder Baker presents her constitutionalist view, for which she is well known, and relates it to various theological issues. Her relatively short essay has the character of a first introduction to constitutionalism that merely touches upon its claims without further explanations. Therefore, Ross Inman's elaborate and incisive criticism of constitutionalism is an uncomfortable read.

Just as in Part I, the part and the chapters with the least introductory character are, fittingly, last in line in Part II. Timothy O'Connor introduces emergent individualism and Thomistic hylomorphist. Robert C. Koons responds with his alternative metaphysics. Angus J. L. Menuge closes Part II with a chapter on the problems of Christian physicalism.

Part III is devoted to theology. John W. Cooper recapitulates elements from his *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), focusing upon a particular target: biblical scholar Joel B. Green. He uses N. T. Wright against Green, as well as against Wright himself. As has been pointed out by more than one philosopher, though Wright attempts to argue against dualism, his own views about the afterlife presuppose a metaphysical dualism between the human body and soul. Green's chapter on "The Strange Case of the Vanishing Soul" affirms a typical misunderstanding between philosophers and biblical scholars on the way in which one arrives at a contemporary concept of the soul. Green's 'the vanishing soul' refers to the English word 'soul' as a translation of *psyche* in the New Testament. Yet Cooper argues for the soul as a concept, not for the word 'soul' as a frequent biblical translation of *nephesh* and *psyche*. Whether a concept of the soul is presupposed in biblical writings is not (only) dependent on the interpretation and translation of the words *nephesh* and *psyche*. Thus, if Cooper is frustrated, it is understandable: Green refuses to consider contemporary dualism and, as a replacement, uses expressions such as "the unified person in his or her entirety" (436) and "a person's essential unity" (437). It is unclear what he means by such a "unified person".

Next, Luke van Horn provides a dualist account of the incarnation; this is followed by a reprint (from *Persons, Human and Divine*⁴) of Trenton Merricks's physicalist account of the incarnation. Finally, Jonathan J. Loose presents arguments against a materialist defense of the resurrection. Like some other dualists in this volume, Loose defends the simple view of identity and rejects the complex view (see footnote 2). He contends that the simple view of identity is not implausible for a dualist. He criticizes Peter van Inwagen's and Dean Zimmermann's materialist accounts of how personal identity crosses the bridge of earthly life and resurrection of the body. Van Inwagen is given the last word on the resurrection in

⁴ P. van Inwagen and D. Zimmerman, *Persons: Human and Divine* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007).

the final essay. He emphasizes that the doctrine of the resurrection is a doctrine, not a “worked-out metaphysics of body, soul, and death” (490). He explains his position as an optional account. Remarkably, he relativizes the task of metaphysics in these matters: “I am now inclined to think that there are almost certainly other ways in which an omnipotent and omniscient being could accomplish the resurrection of the dead than the way that was described in the story I told, ways I am unable even to form an idea of because I lack the conceptual resources to do so” (494). God in some way preserves a remnant of each person (496).

Some might consider van Inwagen’s confession of ignorance a weakness because one can reply that the conceptual resources of dualists are superior at this point. However, van Inwagen’s humility towards his metaphysical task is striking, and it is a pity that the scope of philosophical conceptual resources is not reflected upon earlier, especially because theologians so often write that the person’s survival after death is in God’s hands, not in our conceptual cleverness. Ironically, however, van Inwagen finally criticizes Baker’s constitution account for lacking a criterion of sameness for the first-person-perspective and as such not explaining anything (498-499).

I now turn to some evaluations on the *Companion* as a whole. This volume is an excellent resource for an introductory course on philosophy of mind or a course on theological anthropology in which substance dualism is to be discussed seriously. Taliaferro’s, Hasker’s, and Feser’s chapters particularly are good and accessible introductions. Swinburne and Lowe are slightly more demanding, but excellent introductions to their work. Indeed, it is especially the first part of the book that stands out as a *Companion to Substance Dualism*.

One downside of the *Companion* is its lack of a contribution on panpsychism, a position that increasingly receives serious attention in philosophy of mind, thanks to Thomas Nagel, David Chalmers, and Galen Strawson. Panpsychism refers to a group of theories that hold that mental phenomena are fundamental to reality. Rickabaugh (chapter 5) mentions panpsychism because he considers Hasker’s emergent dualism to be a type of protopanpsychism (75). Nevertheless, a serious discussion of panpsychism is lacking.

Another point of criticism is the editors’ understanding of a “debate-style format,” the style for which they aimed (5, 11). The “debate” consists of a grouping together of proponents and opponents on a certain issue. However, it appears that the contributors have not read one another’s chapters in this particular *Companion*, because the arguments target different sources and claims than the specific ones proposed in this volume. Thus, subtitles like “on emergent dualism” or “pro and contra emergent dualism” would have been more appropriate than the current subtitles that all start with “debating” (e.g. “Debating Emergent Dualism” and “Debating Thomistic Dualism”).

Because (1) the *Companion* is not debate-structured, (2) criticisms are not pointed at particular arguments in the volume, and (3) the non-dualists are in the minority, this is, unsurprisingly, not a resource that considers seriously the challenges to dualism. This might not be a problem given the volume’s topic. Nevertheless, the lack of a thorough debate-style format does highlight some recurring problems in the debates surrounding substance dualism. First, the matter of worldview that I mentioned above: to what extent is the desire to be a metaphysical materialist leading in one’s rejection of substance dualism? Second, the dominant philosophical approach employed in this *Companion*, conceptual analysis, is not accounted for in this volume. Murphy criticizes this method, but other materialists such as

Corcoran and O'Connor employ conceptual analysis as well. It would have been helpful if some contributors would have explained and defended their philosophical method briefly. All this is relevant to systematic theologians, because these fundamental issues impede continentally oriented systematic theologians from considering substance dualism. Also, if the dominant approach would have been defended explicitly, it would have been quite easy to explain why a section on the results of neuroscience would have been fascinating but not crucial: substance dualist philosophical positions do not exclude neuroscientific research, they have different domains. But precisely this conceptual argument is to be explained and defended if one wants to make a case for substance dualism.

To conclude, this is a comprehensive and therefore instructive *Companion to Substance Dualism* that is relevant to a wide audience of students and scholars. Theologians without philosophical training should be able to enjoy and evaluate many of the chapters. Thanks to the variety of essays, content-wise as well as level-wise, there is something to learn for every type of reader. The volume could have gained more depth and relevance, especially for theologians, if methodological issues were more openly explored. Nonetheless, I do not know of a better contemporary anthology on substance dualism at the moment.⁵

⁵ I am grateful to J. T. Turner for helpful editorial suggestions concerning English, as well as to book review editor J. Wessling for his editorial remarks.