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Disability and Resurrection Identity

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Abstract

Christian hope of resurrection requires that the one raised be the same person who died. Philosophers and theologians alike seek to understand the coherence of bodily resurrection and what accounts for numerical identity between the earthly and risen person. I address this question from the perspective of disability. Is a person with a disability raised in the age to come with that disability? Many theologians argue that disability is essential to one's identity such that it could not be eliminated in the resurrection. What anthropology undergirds these claims is not often explicated. I argue that Thomistic hylemorphic anthropology provides the best context to understand the human person such that disability is not essential to identity. In the resurrection, we shall become truly ourselves. The marks of disability may remain, but Thomistic anthropology expresses the coherence of bodily resurrection in which one may hope for healing which eliminates the disability but not numerical identity.

Keywords

Resurrection, Disability, Aquinas, Hylemorphism, Identity

Elizabeth of Hungary, Landgrave of Thüringen, emanated cheerfulness as she personally cared for the poor, hungry, and sick. Her handmaids testified that among the children she 'especially loved the mangy, the diseased, the weak, the dirty, and the deformed'.[1] The one whom children called 'mother' for her love and care of them continued to fill the poor and sick with joy after her death at age 24. Within four years of her death, depositions as part of Pope Gregory IX's canonization procedures attributed 130 cures to her intercession, among them the healing of those with impaired mobility (lameness, paralysis, etc.; 50%), blindness (18%), epilepsy (11%) and mental limitations (insanity, madness; 4%)

[1] Kenneth Baxter Wolf, *The Life and Afterlife of St. Elizabeth of Hungary: Testimony from Her Canonization Hearings,* trans. Kenneth Baxter Wolf (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), #26, p. 200.

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among other infirmities and illnesses, including raising people thought to be dead (6%). These cures, like those worked by Jesus Christ, reveal the Kingdom of God and point to that eschatological fullness when God will wipe away all tears and there will be no more death, mourning, or sadness (Rev 21:4). The blessed will be glad and rejoice and praise God (Rev 19:7). If we were to peer through the dark mirror of this world into the splendor of glory, what would the resurrected bodies of the blessed be like? Will people with physical or mental impairments on earth have them in the heavenly Jerusalem? The Risen Lord himself, however, bore the marks of his crucifixion. Does this indicate that the marks of one's earthly impairments remain as identifiers of that person? Will someone with Down syndrome 'have' Down syndrome in the resurrection? This paper will address these speculative questions about disability and resurrection identity by examining human nature and diachronic numerical identity from a Thomistic hylemorphic anthropology. First, I will describe both the contemporary context in which disability is thought to be integral to one's identity and the limitations of the associated emergentist anthropology. Then I will argue for the competence of Thomistic hylemorphic anthropology to best explain the psychophysical unity of the human person and how disability is not integral to human nature and identity. This will enable me to apply this anthropology to eschatology where I argue that in the resurrection, we may hope for risen bodies healed of mental or physical disabilities though the marks of those conditions may remain.

I. Disability, Personal Identity, and Emergentist Anthropology

Over the last two decades, many authors in the theology of disability suggest, if they do not affirm explicitly, that one's identity is inseparable from one's disability such that resurrection identity requires the existence, or at least the marks, of that disability. John Swinton et al. describe the miraculous postmortem transformation of the corpse of Ian who was a man with Down syndrome.[2] Any physical characteristics of Down syndrome were no longer present in the corpse. The authors wonder what this metamorphosis means regarding Ian's identity and dignity. If this miraculous transformation is indicative of what will happen in the resurrection, they consider a risen body without Down syndrome to be a 'new and alien body' which, because it, in their analysis, lacks continuity with the body Ian had, poses a question for who Ian would be

[2] John Swinton, Harriet Mowat, and Susannah Baines, 'Whose Story Am I? Redescribing Profound Intellectual Disability in the Kingdom of God', *Journal of Religion, Disability and Health* 15 (2011), pp. 5–19.

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in it.[3] The eschatological removal of Down syndrome is thought by the authors to denigrate the earthly dignity of Ian and all those with Down syndrome if that condition is not worthy of the next age. The authors advocate personal identity being rooted in narratives and counternarratives we tell about ourselves and others. An eschatological healing of Down syndrome presumes an able-bodied cultural bias about beauty and normativity that they think is inappropriate for a theological narrative where God has made someone with a particular disability, such as Ian, to be that way. The authors presume disability is integral to identity because it is divinely bestowed. A person with disability cannot be the same person, and thus numerically identity is absent, 'if the primary theological story we tell about him requires that he be changed into something different when he dies. . .'[4] Healing of a disability for these authors eliminates identity. This is also expressed by theologian Nancy Eiesland who suffered lifelong from a congenital bone disease and responded to the possibility of being healed in heaven, 'I would be absolutely unknown to myself and perhaps to God'.[5] Amos Yong argues that disability shapes a person's life and identity not just superficially but in a substantive way, such that a divine heavenly healing of disability threatens diachronic personal identity if someone with a disability is no longer disabled in the resurrection.[6] For Stanley Hauerwas, diseases such as cancer and polio are considered to be external to the subject such that curing the disease does not impinge on the identity of the subject, but in the case of a mental impairment, the cure or elimination of the disability eliminates the subject as well.[7] What anthropology underlies these claims?

Of these examples, only Yong offers a detailed anthropology to substantiate his conclusions. He supports an emergentist anthropology in which the soul is the emergent form of the body shaped by social and environmental relations with mental properties dependent upon and constituted by, but irreducible to, physical properties.[8] He does not reject Thomistic hylemorphism, which like emergentism he also sees as corresponding to biblical holism and scientific findings.

Emergentism, however, presents difficulties for resurrection and for anthropology. Yong does not specify what kind of emergentism he holds, though he mentions the strengths and weaknesses of Nancey

[3] Ibid., p. 9.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Nancy Eiesland, 'Liberation, Inclusion, and Justice: A Faith Response to Persons with Disabilities', *Impact* 14 (2001–02), p. 2.

[6] Amos Yong, *Theology and Down Syndrome: Reimagining Disability in Late Modernity* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007), p. 269.

[7] Stanley Hauerwas, 'Marginalizing the "Retarded"', in *The Deprived, the Disabled, and the Fullness of Life*, ed., Flavian Dougherty (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1984), p. 69.

[8] Yong, *Theology and Down Syndrome*, pp. 170–71, 279.

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Murphy's non-reductive physicalism and William Hasker's emergent dualism (among others).[9] Murphy's physicalism raises the question of whether diachronic identity crosses temporal gaps. At death, the physical human person decomposes and the emergent mental properties come to an end. Can even God bring into being the same numerically identical thing that just went out of existence? Many argue no.[10] Resurrection would seemingly be a new creation of a copy of the original. Solutions to this materialist problem have been proposed but they are self-admittedly fanciful and not free from critiques about the anthropology itself as will be discussed shortly.[11] Yong dismisses this problem of crossing temporal gaps—'even if it were the case'—in the context of significant problems with an alternative position of substance dualism. Hasker's emergent dualism has the identical problem as Murphy's position unless the emergent mind which is an immaterial substance has a way to become subsistent.[12] If the soul or mind is subsistent, however, the problem of too many souls exists. The original earthly soul, which emerged from the earthly body, would continue to exist, but at the resurrection, a resurrection body would be raised which supposedly would generate its own emergent mind or soul.[13]

For any kind of emergentism, a more fundamental anthropological problem exists, namely that of the unity of the organism. Emergent dualism makes the intellect and rationality peripheral to the living animal. Murphy's physicalism has difficulty in even arriving at an individual person or agent.[14] For Hasker, the emergent mind or soul is a substance or individual in itself who thinks, reasons, emotes, and decides, but the material body from which it emerged does not do any of these activities

[9] Ibid., p. 322n27. See Nancey Murphy, 'Nonreductive Physicalism: Philosophical Issues', in *Whatever Happened to the Soul? Scientific and Theological Portraits of Human Nature*, ed., Warren S. Brown, Nancey Murphy and H. Newton Malony (Minneapolis: Fortress 1998), pp. 127–48 and William Hasker, *The Emergent Self* (Ithaca: Cornel University Press, 1999).

[10] For example, see Peter van Inwagen, 'The Possibility of Resurrection', *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 9 (1978), pp. 114–21.

[11] Kevin Corcoran, *Rethinking Human Nature: A Christian Materialist Alternative to the Soul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), p. 133. See also Peter van Inwagen, 'The Possibility of Resurrection', in *The Possibility of Resurrection and Other Essays in Christian Apologetics*, ed., Peter van Inwagen (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998), pp. 45–51; Peter van Inwagen, 'The Possibility of Resurrection', pp. 114–21; and Dean Zimmerman, 'Bodily Resurrection: The Falling Elevator Model Revisited', in *Personal Identity and Resurrection: How Do We Survive Our Death?*, ed., Georg Gasser (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 33–50.

[12] William Hasker, 'On Behalf of Emergent Dualism', in *In Search of the Soul*, ed., Joel B. Green and Stuart L. Palmer (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), pp. 81–83.

[13] Kevin Corcoran, 'A Constitutional Response', in *In Search of the Soul: Four Views of the Mind-Body Problem*, ed., Joel B. Green and Stuart L. Palmer (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), pp. 111–12.

[14] Corcoran, 'A Constitutional Response', p. 150.

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though the physiological processes enable and subserve them.[15] What is the relationship of the emergent individual to the human body subserving it? Murphy's non-reductive physicalism holds that consciousness, which is an emergent property (and not an immaterial entity), exerts top-down causal influence on the physical body through supervenience.[16] However, supervenience has suffered from strong critique as merely stating a dependence between mind and body without any metaphysical grounding.[17] In addition, supervenience fails to account for the unity of the organism in itself because supervenient properties or 'form' are incidental to the underlying material mechanism.[18] A more robust causal order is called for.

II. Hylemorphism and Personal Identity

A Thomistic hylemorphism avoids these difficulties, presents the human being as a unified psychophysical whole, accounts for the dignity of each and every human being as *imago Dei*, and maintains diachronic resurrection identity. Thomistic hylemorphism fills the conceptual space between dualism and materialism. The extremes of this spectrum, Cartesian dualism and eliminative materialism, are not opposites but actually colleagues with the same fundamental vision of the human person. Neither dualism nor materialism allows 'for the existence of things which are essentially biophysical in character, bodily things which are integral parts of the physical universe but of such a kind that their principles of behaviour involve life and consciousness in way not reducible to physical terms'.[19] The holism of living beings as substances with agency was slaughtered on the Cartesian cutting board. The Cartesian division eliminated an Aristotelian substance ontology and replaced it with a twofold ontology of unextended mental things and extended matter. Over three and a half centuries of success in science, a field opened by this switch in ontologies, the Cartesian idea of a mental substance has been discarded by almost all (except those few substance dualists such as Richard Swinburne and Stewart Goetz and emergent dualists

[15] Hasker, 'On Behalf of Emergent Dualism', pp. 78–79, 100.

[16] Murphy, 'Nonreductive Physicalism: Philosophical Issues', pp. 131–38.

[17] Jaegwon Kim, *Mind in a Physical World: An Essay on the Mind-Body Problem and Mental Causation* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998) and Derek S. Jeffreys, 'The Soul Is Alive and Well: Non-Reductive Physicalism and Emergent Mental Properties', *Theology and Science* 2:2 (2004), pp. 205–25.

[18] Michael Hanby, 'Creation as Aesthetic Analogy', in *The Analogy of Being: Invention of the Antichrist or the Wisdom of God?*, ed., Thomas Joseph White (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 2011), p. 375n90.

[19] David Braine, *The Human Person: Animal and Spirit* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), p. 2.

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such as Hasker), but the Cartesian idea of matter has remained.[20] Eliminative materialism reduces the mental to brain activity such that consciousness, self-consciousness, thought, and free will are considered illusions and epiphenomena. Other materialists, such as Nancey Murphy (non-reductive physicalism) and Kevin Corcoran (constitutional materialism), unsatisfied with this dehumanizing anthropology, seek a more moderate path between dualism and eliminative materialism. Nevertheless, materialists, whether eliminative or moderate, have not escaped a Cartesian framework because they are beholden to a Cartesian based concept of matter. Contemporary philosophies of mind, however, overlook the fact that 'the other half of Cartesian dualism, the matter half, remains intact in all of us'.[21] Edmund Runggaldier sees contemporary anthropology, with its Cartesian presuppositions still intact, as beholden to a deficient ontology which neglects and rejects an account of human beings as living organisms with powers of intentionality, agency, and self-consciousness. An anthropology which can take all of this into account requires a richer ontology which Runggaldier finds in Aristotelian hylemorphism. An Aristotelian-based anthropology and ontology fills the space between dualism and materialism and gives a holistic account for the human being as a living organism with truly human characteristics such as diachronic personal identity, indexicality, agent causality, and self-consciousness.

This Aristotelian ontology entails a radically different understanding of matter and body compared to the modern ontology. Contemporary concepts of matter are rooted in Cartesianism and modern physics and chemistry. Matter is 'stuff'; it has extension and it is universal. Cartesian bodies of living beings are comprised of this basic matter and can be studied scientifically, but these Cartesian bodies, operating by mechanical principles, cannot account for thought, which Descartes separated off as belonging to a separate mental substance. Thus, the unity of the human being is betrayed and severed by a Cartesian-based modern ontology.

The Aristotelian notion of matter, however, allows for the holistic unity of the living being. For Aristotle, matter (in the modern sense) is not a basic entity but living substances, which are composed of form and matter (Aristotelian sense). Matter in this latter sense is not something real or concrete on its own but potentiality of which the soul or

[20] See Richard Swinburne, *The Evolution of the Soul* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986) and Stewart Goetz, 'Substance Dualism', in *In Search of the Soul*, ed., Joel B. Green and Stuart L. Palmer (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), pp. 33–60.

[21] M. F. Burnyeat, 'Is an Aristotelian Philosophy of Mind Still Credible? A Draft', in *Essays on Aristotle's De Anima*, ed., Martha C. Nussbaum and Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p.16.

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form is its actualization or realization.[22] Matter has meaning and is distinguished by the mode of the acting of the substance, the kind of living organism something is. In the contemporary view, mushrooms, daisies, dragonflies, and humans are each comprised of the same fundamental matter, but from an Aristotelian understanding, mushrooms act differently than daisies than dragonflies than human beings because of the distinct forms actualizing the matter. The soul of a given creature informs the matter to make that creature a living body or organism. The soul is not something separate from the body. Thus, the soul is not as Plato thought a pilot in a ship.[23] The soul is *in* the body the way meaning is in a word. The soul is the form of the body; it is the organizing principle of the body. The intellectual observer can identify the kind of thing something is by seeing how it acts.

III. Hylemorphism and Identity: Essence, Properties, Powers, and Accidents

The substantial form, or soul, determines a thing's identity in the midst of a dynamic flux of matter (modern sense). The Blue Dasher dragonfly remains the same kind of thing and the numerically identical thing because of its soul despite the assimilation of matter, growth, and egestion which affect qualitative identity. Spatio-temporal continuity is a symptom and not the ground of identity, which is the soul.[24] The taxonomist, in identifying a creature as a Blue Dasher dragonfly or a redwood tree or a human being, grasps intellectually what that thing's essence or nature is. Furthermore, the nature of a thing is its essence in operation; it is that whereby the entity is what it is and acts as it does.[25] The essence is what kind of thing something is, for example, a Blue Dasher dragonfly; the substance, the Blue Dasher dragonfly itself, is the mode of being that kind of thing.[26] The substance of the thing is characterized by various accidents, properties, and powers.

In determining the identity of something or someone, a critical distinction must be made between the essence of the thing and its properties which flow from it. This will be significant for thinking about the identity of a person with disabilities. Confusing or eliminating this

[22] Edmund Runggaldier, 'The Aristotelian Alternative to Functionalism and Dualism', in *Die menschliche Seele: Brauchen Wir den Dualismus?*, ed., Bruno Niederbacher and Edmund Runggaldier (Frankfurt: Ontos, 2006), p. 228.

[23] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles. Book Two: Creation*, trans. James F. Anderson (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1956), II. 57. 2. Hereafter, *SCG*.

[24] Edward Feser, *Scholastic Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction* (Piscataway, NJ: editiones scholasticae, 2014), p. 209.

[25] David S. Oderberg, *Real Essentialism* (New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 156.

[26] Feser, *Scholastic Metaphysics*, p. 232.

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distinction results in a taxonomic error.[27] The substantial form of a Blue Dasher dragonfly does not exist as a naked form but is actualized by its accidents, which are the attributes and characteristics of that thing. Accidents can be proper or contingent. Proper accidents or properties follow or flow from the essence, nature or substantial form of the organism, whereas contingent accidents do not flow from the essence, nature or form but may be present or not. A subset of proper accidents are the powers that flow from a substantial form. These properties arise through formal causation; the substantial form of the kind of being effects the properties and powers.[28] The substance of Blue Dasher dragonfly brings about effects as a causal agent through its powers or active potencies.[29] Furthermore, proper accidents or properties, including powers, may or may not be manifested in actuality.[30]

The Blue Dasher dragonfly like any organism is a living body, and a living body has a nature which is ordered or directed to various ends. Natures are expressed in a developmental manner. Organisms are endowed with certain powers which may develop or not. The nymph is directed toward emergence as an adult, but whether it does so depends on certain conditions—being eaten by a trout, lack of prey to eat, genetic anomalies. The failure to achieve that end is not a criterion for whether the dragonfly has a dragonfly nature. John Kavanaugh, S.J. distinguishes between performance and endowment. Different kinds of beings exist because 'they have different capacities and endowments that are open to activation. Capacities need not be activated or realized or fulfilled. Endowments need not be exercised or engaged'.[31] The absence or frustration of these capacities do not place that organism in another species, which would be a taxonomic error; rather it is an organism of a certain kind that has not fulfilled what it is endowed to do. The essence or nature of a Blue Dasher dragonfly is to be winged and to fly. This is not manifested at the egg or nymph stage but only as an adult. Even an adult, after escaping from a barn swallow's beak, may have lost or damaged its wings and thus be unable to fly. It is nevertheless still a Blue Dasher dragonfly, though injured. The property or proper accident of being winged may be lost or frustrated from working, but this does not eliminate the essence or nature to be winged and to fly.

The same holds true for human beings who are defined as rational animals. We also have a nature which is developmental and endowed with certain capacities which may or may not be achieved. Again, the achievement of that capacity, however, is not a criterion of whether

[27] Oderberg, *Real Essentialism*, p. 160.
[28] Feser, *Scholastic Metaphysics*, p. 234.
[29] *Ibid.*, 42, 46; Oderberg, *Real Essentialism*, p. 131.
[30] Feser, *Scholastic Metaphysics*, p. 192.
[31] John F. Kavanaugh, S.J., *Who Count as Persons? Human Identity and the Ethics of Killing* Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2001), p. 67.

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someone has that nature. Rational thought, intellect, and free will are proper accidents flowing from the rational nature of being human. Matter informed by a rational soul has a specified way of being that kind of thing; it has certain properties and powers which flow from the form, and the creature acts in a certain way. An anencephalic child or severely brain damaged adult may lack the power of intellection or the use of reason, but those persons are still persons, still human beings who are rational animals, 'even though [they] lack some of the properties associated with the human essence'.[32] Because the *use* of reason is not present or activated does not exclude that person from being a human, defined as a rational animal. He or she is not classified under a new species because the property or power is absent. They still are by nature and essence human beings and persons, for 'every human being without exception is a rational animal, even if some human beings (e.g. those with severe brain damage) cannot exercise the powers that flow or follow from their rationality'.[33]

IV. Disability and Providence

The distinction between essence and property allows one to differentiate between normal and defective. These are metaphysical terms and not evaluative terms regarding one's humanity or dignity. Knowing the essence or nature of a kind of being enables one to identify when some injury or limitation or defect is present. It is the foundation for the field of medicine and healing.[34] Persons, such as those with Down syndrome or who are hermaphrodites, suffer from anomalous genomic or chromosomal activity with resulting physical or mental impairments or nonstandard anatomy and physiology. They, like many others with varied conditions, have through the centuries been stigmatically labeled with terms such as monster, sinister, threatening, inferior, unfortunate, or even freak. This reality raises the socio-cultural context within which the philosophical and theological analysis of disability in terms of identity, human nature, and resurrection takes place. I think a brief treatment of this context is important because it colors the philosophical and theological analysis of disability.

Sadly and even sinfully, many in the human community mistreat and mock those with disabilities. Sin distorts our vision of God, of ourselves, and of the other. Aquinas, in fact, judges the derision of those with disabilities to be a mortal sin.[35] The identity and dignity of persons

[32] Oderberg, *Real Essentialism*, p. 161.

[33] Feser, *Scholastic Metaphysics*, pp. 233–34.

[34] See for example the field of teratology: http://www.teratology.org/

[35] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Allen, TX: Christian Classics, 1948), II-II, q. 75, a. 2. Hereafter, *ST*. See also *ST* II-II, q. 72,

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with disabilities are seen within the context of divine Providence. For Thomas, each person is created *imago Dei*, irrespective of what we today call disabilities, and is ordered to beatitude with God.[36] Because human beings are composite of body and soul, they are corruptible such that natural processes may occasionally be thwarted or disrupted and even produce 'monsters'.[37] Those who suffer a mental or physical impairment lack a good they should have and so suffer an evil.[38] In contrast to Swinton and other theologians of disability who attribute disability intrinsically to a person's identity due to the presumption that God made (i.e., directly willed) the person to be that way, Aquinas considers evils of this kind never to be intended even indirectly by God but rather permitted for antecedent or consequent goods.[39] If God has only permitted the disability, then that condition need not, on the level of divine will, remain in the resurrection.

Disability is a privation of what naturally 'should' be present, but it does not exclude the person from being *imago Dei* or impair one's human dignity. A child with Down syndrome may lack certain abilities to reason and think like others, and a person with a hermaphrodite condition has an ambiguous sexuality, but this does not affect the human nature which they share with all other humans. Those who have physical and/or mental impairments and disabilities are no less human persons, rather the impairments and disabilities are frustrated capacities and not an indication of a qualitatively different nature.

Implicit to Aquinas' anthropology is creation and all it entails concerning human dependence and creatureliness. It is the *exitus* context for understanding *imago Dei*. The *reditus* dimension contextualizes our created lives as ordered to God as our final end, which is beatitude for all, whether disabled or not. Contrary to the critique of theologians such as Hans Reinders that those who have severe mental disabilities (e.g., micro-encephalism) and lack the use of reason are excluded from the *imago Dei* as well as from participation in the common good and even then from participation in the life of God, Thomas explicitly affirms the

a. 2. See Miguel Romero, 'Aquinas on the *Corporis Infirmitas*: Broken Flesh and the Grammar of Grace', in *Disability in the Christian Tradition*, ed., Brian Brock and John Swinton (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2012), p. 120.

[36] *ST* I, q. 93; *ST* I-II, q. 3, a. 1–8.

[37] *ST* I, q. 48, a. 2. For examples of Aquinas discussing providence and monsters see *Quaestiones Disputatae de Potentia Dei,* trans. English Dominican Fathers (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1952), q. 3, a. 6, r. 5, http://dhspriory.org/thomas/english/QDdePotentia.htm (accessed October 15, 2014) and *Questiones Disputatae de Veritate*, trans. Robert W. Mulligan, S.J. (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1952), q. 5, a. 4. http://dhspriory.org/thomas/QDdeVer5.htm#5 (accessed October 17, 2014).

[38] *ST* I, q. 49, a. 1.

[39] John F. X. Knasas, *Aquinas and the Cry of Rachel: Thomistic Reflections on the Problem of Evil* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2013), p. 146.

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graced knowledge and love of God bestowed to all who are baptized, including those who are without reason, whether because of age or mental disability.[40] All humans regardless of condition are created to share in the resurrection.

V. Resurrection and Identity

The Incarnation reveals the goodness of creation, and the Resurrection does not abandon what has been but brings it to completion. The 'victorious might' of Christ's resurrection ushers in the new creation whose redemption is a 'a real ontological process which began in the incarnation and ends not so much in the forgiveness of sin as in the divinization of the world'.[41] Christ's resurrection appearances are 'the first signs for the transformation of the material world in the salvific power of the Easter event'.[42] In discussing eschatology, I want to emphasize the radical transformation involved in a new bodily resurrected life and the difficulty of language to describe this new situation. Theological humility should characterize discussion about the resurrection body, for we speak only with a 'learned ignorance'.

Christians hope to be raised bodily from the dead by God and share in the resurrection of Jesus Christ which is a bodily existence (1 Cor 6:14, Rom 8:23). As with Christ's risen bodily existence, we cannot imagine the reality of our resurrected bodily existence. 'Beloved, we are God's children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed. We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is' (1 John 3:2). Paul offers us a glimpse of this life with his oxymoronic description of the risen body as a spiritual body (*soma pneumatikon*).[43] What is sown perishable, in dishonor, in weakness, and as a physical body (*soma psychikon*) is raised imperishable, in glory, in power, and a spiritual body (1 Cor 15:42–44). Paul is not speaking about the composition of a body, whether earthly or heavenly, but of different 'temporal modes' of existence, i.e. a *soma psychikon* is a type of person subject to sin and appropriate to 'this age' in contrast to a

[40] *ST* II-II, q. 45, a. 2, ad. 3; *ST* III, q. 69, a. 6. See Romero, 'Aquinas on the *Corporis Infirmitas*', p. 115. For Hans Reinders critique see Hans S. Reinders, *Receiving the Gift of Friendship* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2008), especially pp. 88–122 and Hans S. Reinders, 'Human Dignity in the Absence of Agency', in *God and Human Dignity*, ed. R. Kendall Soulen and Linda Woodhead (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2006), pp. 121–39.

[41] Karl Rahner, 'Dogmatic Questions on Easter', in *Theological Investigations,* Vol. IV, trans. Kevin Smyth (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1966), p. 126.

[42] Leo Scheffczyk, *Auferstehung: Prinzip christlichen Glaubens* (Einsiedeln: Johannes, 1976), p. 236.

[43] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., *First Corinthians*, vol. 32, The Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), pp. 594, 596–97.

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soma pneumatikon who is a type of person transformed by the Spirit and fitting for the 'new creation'.[44] Our resurrection, like Christ's, entails both continuity and radical transformation that is a new creation; it is creation, however, not from nothing (*ex nihilo*) but from the old (*ex vetere*) matter of this present age.[45]

The numerically identical person who lived and died is also raised by God's power and love. This does not entail that qualitative identity remains the same. Such properties as weight, height, age, hair amount and length, and health are not constant but change throughout one's lifetime. Even impairment and disability, as we have seen, are not intrinsic to the person's identity. We could imagine a situation in the future where gene therapy (administered in an ethical manner) could heal certain genetic conditions of the person on earth which would not eliminate diachronic identity.[46] Could we not imagine the divine resurrected healing of a sibling with Down syndrome that does not destroy her identity?[47]

Thomistic anthropology accounts for numerical identity of the earthly and risen human being through *esse*, formal identity, and a weak material identity.[48] The continuity of identity resides primarily in the *esse* of the soul. The *esse* of the soul is the *esse* of the one living human animal. The body's being depends on the soul, not the soul on the body.[49] Because the soul has its own *esse*, it is subsistent and continues to exist after death separate from the body/corpse. The separated soul desires its body, and thus this holistic anthropology points to the coherence of resurrection and the restoration of the unity of the human being as a living body.

The subsistent soul, then, is critical as a principle of continuity and identity in the gap between death and resurrection. The same soul will

[44] See Andrew Johnson, 'Turning the World Upside Down in 1 Corinthians 15: Apocalyptic Epistemology, the Resurrected Body and the New Creation', *The Evangelical Quarterly* 75 no. 4 (2003), pp. 291–309.

[45] John Polkinghorne, 'Eschatological Credibility: Emergent and Teleological Processes', in *Resurrection: Theological and Scientific Assessments*, ed., Ted Peters, Robert J. Russell and Michael Welker (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2002), p. 50.

[46] Jun Jiang et al., 'Translating Dosage Compensation to Trisomy 21', *Nature* 500 (15 August 2013), pp. 296–302; Christina Fillat and Xavier Altafaj, 'Gene Therapy for Down Syndrome', in *Down Syndrome: From Understanding the Neurobiology to Therapy*, ed., Maria Dierssen and Rafael De La Torre (Oxford: Elsevier Science and Technology, 2012), pp. 237–47; and Inder Verma, 'Gene Therapy That Works', *Science* 341 (2013), pp. 853–55.

[47] R.T. Mullins, 'Some Difficulties for Amos Yong's Disability Theology of the Resurrection', *Ars Disputandi* 11 (2011), pp. 24–32; http://www.ArsDisputandi.org.

[48] Thomas would like to hold on to a strong material continuity, that the very matter of the former body will be raised, but he is also aware of the biological processes (ecosystem recycling and cannibalism) which may preclude that. Cognizant of the cult of relics, he settles for a weak material continuity in that the matter of this present world will be used in the resurrection. See *ST Suppl*, q. 74, a. 9, ad. 1–2; *ST Suppl*, q. 78, a. 2–3; *ST Suppl*, q. 79, a. 3.

[49] *ST* I-II, q. 2, a. 5.

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inform or be united with the same body it once had. Thomas is aware that in the course of a lifetime, the living body has a flux of matter passing through it. He compares the flux of matter in a stable body with the flux of matter in a stable fire.[50] For both human bodies and fires, the gradual replacement of matter over time maintains the continuity of the body or fire. Thomas addresses the issue of gappy existence by positing that if the fire were extinguished and another restarted, then these fires would be distinct and not numerically identical fires.[51] The analogy of this inability to cross a temporal gap for fire does not apply to human beings, for the form of the human, unlike the form of fire, is self-subsistent. Thomas specifically attests to the numerical identity both of humans on earth over time—with the flux of matter in metabolic processes resulting in growth and development—and between humans before and after resurrection.[52] The numerically identical soul informs resurrected matter to form a resurrected body, but this body is the same but transformed body as the earthly one. The soul is configured to only one body. Thomas' anthropology allows us to allay concerns that a healed resurrected body would be an alien body to the person on earth with disability. Such a concern presumes a dualistic notion that the soul could 'reside' in any number of bodies, which is akin to reincarnation.

Thomas, however, explicitly rejects reincarnation because of the unity of the soul and body which produces a unique, unrepeatable history for the human animal. The soul is related to only one body—its own; the one it makes to be a living body. The soul as form of the body is so inextricably bound with the body it enacts that it cannot, like a dualistic Cartesian or Platonic soul, be connected to various different bodies. The soul and body originate together in a natural union.[53] So unique is this unity of soul and body that 'the human soul retains its proper existence when separated from the body, having an aptitude and a natural inclination to be united to the body'.[54] This inclination or desire of the soul for its body precludes the soul's being joined to the body of another person or another non-human species.[55] The separated soul, even without the matter which individuated it, maintains its individuation by reason of its own *esse* and its inclination to its body.[56] The resurrected body of Ian or Nancy is not an alien body, even if healed. It is his or her own body animated by the same intellectual soul as on earth. The man born blind, the paralytic, and man with the withered hand are each numerically identical before and after their being

[50] *ST* I, q. 119, a. 1, ad. 2.
[51] *ST* I, q. 119, a. 1, ad. 5.
[52] *SCG* IV, c. 81, para. 12.
[53] *ST* I, q. 118, a. 3; *SCG* II, c. 83, para. 13; *SCG* II, c. 68, para. 7 and 12.
[54] *ST* I, q. 76. a.1, ad. 6.
[55] *SCG* II, c. 73, para. 4. See also *SCG* IV, c. 84, para. 6.
[56] *ST* I, q. 76, a. 2, ad. 2.

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healed by Jesus, even though various properties of their life, not only physically but spiritually and relationally as well, have changed. Divine healing on earth does not eliminate identity, and numerical identity is not challenged by divine healing in the resurrection. But the question now centers on whether healing of impairments and disabilities will take place in the resurrection.

The Risen Jesus is numerically identical to the man born of Mary, raised in Nazareth, and crucified in Jerusalem (Acts 2:32, 36), yet he appears to the disciples in a radically transformed manner. Resurrected existence is a new form of reality wherein one enters into the very mystery of God and is no longer subject to the natural laws governing biological creatures.[57] It is the new creation completely permeated by the power of the Holy Spirit. Though radically discontinuous, the Risen Lord manifests continuity with the former mode of earthly existence. He knows who his disciples are, he forgives Peter for his threefold renunciation, and his body is numerically identical with the crucified body that was laid in the tomb. Jesus Christ rose bodily from the dead with the marks of his crucifixion and piercing. Those were impairments in life; they killed and disfigured him, but they are not impairments in the resurrection. The resurrection has healed these wounds; they neither cause suffering nor threaten the life of the one who can die no more. They neither impair his abrupt arrivals and departures nor his mobility in walking miles from Jerusalem.

What about the blessed who will share in Christ's resurrection? Will they have complete bodies? Two principles in tension guide speculation on this: 1) Jesus healed many people not only of illness and disease but also of impairments and disabilities as signs of the Kingdom of God and 2) Jesus rose with the marks of his suffering. Jesus' healings not only restored physical wholeness to the diseased or impaired body (e.g., sight, speech, hearing, mobility, health) but restored the person to the community from which one had been alienated. They were signs of the Kingdom of God and in one case of the explicit glorifying of God. At the resurrection, those who had been healed on earth would presumably rise with their healed condition. For those who were not healed, how will they rise? The focus of much contemporary thought suggests that, given the dignity and beauty of those with disabilities as they are, concerns discussed above about recognizing diachronic identity, the reality of Jesus' bearing his marks of impairment, and the interpretation that Jesus' healings were primarily about restoring communal relations and acceptance, those with disabilities will continue with their bodily condition in the resurrection. We have discussed above, however, that by understanding disability as permitted and not willed directly by

[57] Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth, Part Two,* trans. Philip Whitmore (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011), pp. 241–77.

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God, disability is not intrinsic to identity and need not continue in the resurrection. If not necessary, may one or should one hope for a restored risen body? Are healings only for this age, where sight, for example, in a visible world facilitates flourishing? Are healings primarily for restoration to a community from which people had been excluded and neglected? The presumption is that if the community, as in heaven, is conformed to Christ with love and mercy, then no such exclusion, alienation, and derision would exist, thus eliminating the need for healing. But if bodily healing is secondary or not needed, would Jesus' earthly ministry have better focused on changing the hearts of community members to accept the sick and disabled they have been excluding and thus for Jesus to leave them in their sickness and impairment? Is it the impairment that needs to be changed or the hearts of selfish independence?

From the reverse side of whether healings are for this age only is whether impairments and disabilities are for this age only. Should we presume that the conditions of the present age continue in the age to come? What of the radical discontinuity aspect of resurrection? In this age, the soul is the principle of life of the natural human being who is subject to the laws of this world, but with a *soma pneumatikon* in the resurrection, the Spirit 'enobles the power of animation in our vital principle, so that the body is enabled to get beyond the laws of its original elements, and take on spiritual qualities'.[58] Would the new creation entail healed bodies? Not only conditioned by cultural norms about beauty, Augustine speculates about radical healing in the resurrection such that the wounds of the martyrs will not be deformities but have a dignity luminous in beauty. Any lost members will be restored and marks of the martyrdom will not be considered defects at all.[59] St. Ignatius of Antioch does not want to be hindered from achieving martyrdom so that he may become fully himself in Christ.[60] The marks of disability may remain in a similar manner, as signs of what the person has suffered and endured in life. Their identity is formed by, but not identical with, the disability.

In the resurrection we will have no tears or suffering, either physically or societally induced. We will be conformed to and perfected in Christ (Eph 4:13; Col 1:28), becoming our true selves in him. Given the distinction between essence and properties and endowments and performance, another possibility is that physical and mental disabilities will be healed in the resurrection because they are not inherent to our identity. Perhaps, the resurrection can be thought of in analogy of taking

[58] F.X. Durrwell, C.SS.R., *The Resurrection: A Biblical Study*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1960), p. 289.

[59] Augustine, *City of God*, XXII.19. p. 1062.

[60] Ignatius of Antioch, Romans 6.2 in *Early Christian Fathers*, ed., Cyril Richardson (New York: Macmillan 1970), p. 105.

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a sabbatical year in a foreign country.[61] You deliver lectures and debate at conferences, but you are hindered in truly expressing yourself because of the limitations you have of mastering the foreign language. You return to your native land and a colleague from your sabbatical location visits and witnesses you in the classroom and in debate. She marvels at your performance and tells you that she enjoyed finally seeing you 'in action' which means seeing you in your native environment. The resurrection brings the harvest of our life—experiences, history, virtues, memories—to a new bodily pitch in Christ. We enter into a new situation of God's love that is continuous yet discontinuous with the former situation. In the resurrection, we shall finally be in our element and in action, transformed in God's love and grace. The nature of God's love means approval of the other, willing his or her good, delivering from evil and healing wounds, generating and creating something new, being with others, welcoming them and desiring to be with them, and being eternally faithful.[62] That new age is what Augustine calls the Great Sabbath when '[w]e ourselves shall become that seventh day, when we have been replenished and restored by his blessing and sanctification.[63] We shall become truly ourselves in our true homeland freed from all limitations of the fallen world. May we not hope and rejoice to see Leonard with strong legs but with marks of childhood polio that caused him to wear braces and be alienated by neighbors or to encounter Kelly and Ian, bearing respectively the marks of micro-encephaly and Down syndrome, but now healed and elevated and who finally know their true selves as God knows them, each called by her or his new name (Rev 2:17). Congenital diseases and chromosomal abnormalities shape the history and personality of those with disabilities, but these impairments and disabilities are not of our essence and hence may be healed without compromising identity. Whether they are or not is unknown, but I think this analysis allows us to hope for a radical healing and transformation in our glorified body. Such a change would not be a pejorative evaluation on who we were and what we suffered. We are all created and loved by God. In Christ, we are God's work of art and part of God's household (Eph 2:10, 19). Beautiful works of art, even in our earthly impairment and disability, should not blind us to what riches of glory God has in store for us (Eph 1:18). The hope that belongs to God's call just might include the healing and restoration of natural bodies into spiritual bodies as we discover our true selves in the resurrection.

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[61] I thank Michael Sherwin, O.P. for the genesis of this image.

[62] Gerald O'Collins, S.J., *Jesus Risen: An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), pp. 194–95.

[63] Augustine, *City of God*, XXII. 30. p. 1090.

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