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Got to have soul

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Abstract: **Kevin Corcoran offers an account of how one can be a physicalist about human persons, deny temporal gaps in the existence of persons, and hold that there is an afterlife. I argue that Corcoran's account both violates the necessity of metaphysical identity and implausibly makes an individual's existence dependent on factors wholly extrinsic to the individual. Corcoran's defence is considered, as well as Stephen Davis's suggestions on how an account like Corcoran's can defend itself against these concerns. It is shown, however, that the difficulties remain in full force and, therefore, that Corcoran's account fails to reconcile physicalism, no gappy existence, and an afterlife.**

Introduction

Most theists hold that there is an afterlife. God's plan for his human persons is usually taken to extend beyond simply our short life on earth, so that the death of a person's human body is not the end of the person's existence. On a substance-dualist theory of human persons, there is a clear account of how this survival into an afterlife is possible. When one's body dies, the person continues to exist as a disembodied, immaterial substance. The afterlife is easily entered into without the body, for a person is an immaterial mind that is numerically distinct from, and in no way constituted by, his body.

If, however, one is a physicalist about human persons, then there is a bump in the road. There are at least two ways in which one may be a physicalist about human persons. One may hold that human persons are identical to their bodies. Or, alternatively, one may hold that human persons are essentially constituted by their bodies but not identical to their bodies. On both of these physicalist accounts, however, the death of a person's body entails the non-existence of the person. Now, it is plausible to deny the possibility of persons having time gaps in their existence. That is, it seems that if a person ceases to exist, then the numerically same person cannot come back into existence. Another, similar person may begin to exist, but that would just be a duplicate, i.e. a second person

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that is qualitatively similar to, but numerically distinct from, the first person. The impossibility of human persons beginning to exist more than once yields a bump in the physicalist's road to an afterlife. If human persons cease to exist after the death of their bodies, and they can never again exist once they cease to exist, then how can a human person survive the death of his body?

Kevin Corcoran attempts to answer this question. He offers an account of postmortem survival that is consistent with both a physicalist account of human persons (where human persons are either identical to their bodies or essentially constituted by their bodies) and the claim that the existence of persons cannot have temporal gaps. This paper will provide good reasons for denying the success of this attempt. Corcoran's account, it will be argued, both violates the necessity of metaphysical identity and makes an individual's existence dependent on factors wholly extrinsic to the individual. Corcoran's defence will be considered, as well as Stephen Davis's suggestions on how an account like Corcoran's can defend itself against these concerns. It will be shown, however, that the difficulties remain in full force and, therefore, Corcoran fails to provide a plausible account of how one can be a physicalist about human persons, deny temporal gaps in the existence of persons, and hold that there is an afterlife.

Corcoran's life fission

Corcoran states, 'By the words *human body* I mean, for starters, to pick out that entity usually associated with the words *physical organism of the species homo sapiens*.'[1] He then adopts a view of physical organisms in which a physical organism is a collection of physical simples that are caught up in a life. Here, 'life' is understood as 'an individual biological event of a very special sort, a sort that is remarkably stable, well individuated, self-directing, self-maintaining, and homeodynamic'.[2] So, an organism is a collection of physical simples that stand in the relevant causal relations, namely, those causal relations that produce a self-directing biological event. Corcoran adopts the following identity criterion for physical organisms: 'If x and y are physical organisms, then x is identical to y if and only if x and y are constituted by (sets of) physical simples whose activities constitute the same continued life.'[3]

Now, given that the life of a physical organism essentially involves certain causal relations among a set of physical simples, Corcoran is prompted to formulate the following persistence condition for physical organisms: 'If an organism O at t_2 is the same as an organism P that exists at t_1 (where $t_1 < t_2$), then the (set of) simples that compose P at t_1 must be causally related in the life-preserving way to the (set of) simples that compose O at t_2.'[4] So, on this view, the persistence of a physical organism does not entail the persistence of the same set of physical simples but, rather, the persistence of the same life. An organism can slough off old cells and have them replaced by new cells, without ceasing

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to exist. Indeed, an organism can survive a complete replacement of physical simples, so long as the life of that organism persists. And since the human body is simply a specific type of organism, i.e. an organism of the species *homo sapiens*, the above persistence condition is the same for a human body.

Corcoran concludes with the following necessary and sufficient condition for the persistence of a human body: 'A human body B that exists at t_2 is the same as a human body A that exists at t_1 just in case the temporal stages leading up to B at t_2 are immanent-causally connected to the temporal stage of A at t_1.'[5] As I understand Corcoran, this persistence condition differs from the previous one only by making the previous persistence condition both necessary and sufficient and by spelling out the life-preserving causal relation in terms of immanent causation. I, however, do not want to make my argument rest on Corcoran's, or any other, specific understanding of the life-preserving causal relation. So, I will discuss Corcoran's account in his more general terms of a life-preserving causal relation. That is, I will work with the following understanding of Corcoran's persistence condition: a human body B that exists at t_2 is the same as a human body A that exists at t_1 if and only if the (set of) simples that compose A at t_1 are causally related in the life-preserving way to the (set of) simples that compose B at t_2.

With the above account of human bodies and their persistence condition, Corcoran offers the following account of resurrection:

> It seems possible that the causal paths traced by the simples caught up in the life of my body just before death can be made by God to fission such that the simples composing my body then are causally related to two different, spatially segregated sets of simples. One of the sets of simples would immediately cease to constitute a life and come instead to compose a corpse, while the other would either continue to constitute a body in heaven or continue to constitute a body in some intermediate state. In other words, the set of simples along one of the branching paths at the instant after fission fails to perpetuate a life while the other set of simples along the other branch does continue to perpetuate a life. If this is at least possible, as it seems to be, then we have a view of survival compatible with the joint theses that human persons are essentially physical objects and that such objects cannot enjoy gappy existence.[6]

The necessity of metaphysical identity

I take the following principle to be a basic principle in the metaphysics of identity:

> NMI For any x and y, if x is identical to y, then, necessarily, x is identical to y.

This principle applies to numerical identity. It claims that the relation of numerical identity is a necessary relation. That is, if $x=y$, then it is not possible that x not be y or y not be x. Or, in terms of possible worlds, if $x=y$, then there

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is no possible world in which x is not y or y is not x. I will argue, however, that Corcoran's account of resurrection violates NMI and, therefore, suffers from the absurd consequence of making identity contingent.

Consider a human body, Etta, just before her death, at time t_1. Suppose that God then performs the fission process described by Corcoran. Immediately following that process, at time t_2, there are two fission products:

B a body composed of a set of physical simples that is caught up in a life;
C a corpse composed of a set of physical simples that is not caught up in a life.

C contains the same set of physical simples that was caught up in Etta's life at t_1. At t_2, however, the set of physical simples is caught up in no life at all. This causal branch of the fission procedure was not a life-preserving one, leaving the physical simples of C to compose no more than a corpse. On the other hand, the new set of physical simples that composes B at t_2 is causally related in a life-preserving way to the set of physical simples that composes Etta at t_1. And, on Corcoran's persistence condition for a human body, this life-preserving causal connection makes B at t_2 identical to Etta at t_1.

Now, it is possible that both B at t_2 and C at t_2 survive the fission process. It seems that the same sort of causal relation that occurs between the set of physical simples that composes B at t_2 and the set of physical simples that composes Etta at t_1 could be made by God to occur also between the set of physical simples that composes C at t_2 and the set of physical simples that composes Etta at t_1. Suppose, then, that this possibility is actual and that both fission products at t_2 are causally related in the life-preserving way to Etta at t_1. So, on Corcoran's persistence condition for a human body, both B at t_2 and C at t_2 have equal claim to being identical to Etta at t_1. Hence, either both B at t_2 and C at t_2 are identical to Etta at t_1, or both B at t_2 and C at t_2 are not identical to Etta at t_1.

Now, B at t_2 is not identical to C at t_2. B at t_2 and C at t_2 are two, numerically distinct bodies composed of two different sets of physical simples. So, it cannot be the case that both B at t_2 and C at t_2 are identical with Etta at t_1, for that would violate the transitivity of identity. That is, Etta at t_2 would be numerically identical with two numerically distinct bodies, which is impossible. Therefore, it must be the case that both B at t_2 and C at t_2 are not identical with Etta at t_1. Thus, the possibility that both B at t_2 and C at t_2 survive the fission process shows that, on Corcoran's persistence condition for a human body, it is possible that B at t_2 not be identical with Etta at t_1. But in the original fission case, the same persistence condition entails that B at t_2 is identical with Etta at t_1. Therefore, Corcoran's account of resurrection violates NMI.[7]

Corcoran has an interesting response to the charge that his account renders identity contingent. The theist who wants to reconcile a physicalist account of

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persons with postmortem survival can, as a theist, reasonably appeal to God. Corcoran suggests the following appeal to God as a plausible one. If God is a necessary being, then God exists in all possible worlds. And if God has, as an essential part of His nature, the will for the good of His human creatures, then God wills the good for His human creatures in all possible worlds in which God exists and creates humans. So, the theist can reply that God is a necessary being and essentially wills the good for His human creatures, and, therefore, there is no possible world in which God creates humans and allows the ultimate demise of His human creatures. But the survival of both fission products would entail the permanent non-existence of a human creature. Hence, there is no possible world in which both fission products survive, for an essential feature of God would always prevent that state of affairs from occurring and God exists in every possible world. Thus, it is not possible for both fission products to survive and, therefore, Corcoran's account of the resurrection does not violate NMI.[8]

One might reply by challenging the premise that God's nature entails that He would never allow one of His creatures to be annihilated. Consider a possible world in which there is a human creature that, due to an incredibly corrupt use of his free will, becomes a source of great evil in the world. Indeed, this individual is so evil that God, as an essentially, morally perfect being, is forced to rid the world of this evil.[9] So, there is a possible world in which God annihilates one of His human creatures. But if there is such a possible world, then it is possible for both fission products to survive. God may just choose to annihilate the evil creature by performing a fission process that results in two living products. God may even find this method useful, for God is able to both rid the world of an evil and produce two new human creatures at the same time. Thus, the possibility of God being required, by His morally perfect nature, to destroy one of His human creatures entails that it is possible that God allow both fission products to survive.

Now Corcoran could respond by appealing to some moral claims. Perhaps it is the case that human life is so valuable that it is never morally permissible completely to destroy a human life. Or perhaps morality would require God not to create such an evil creature in the first place, or to prevent a human creature from ever becoming corrupt to the point that it must be annihilated. The debate, however, has now become a moral one. The debate is now about whether or not it is ever morally good for God to annihilate one of His human creatures. While this issue is both interesting and important, I want to get at a metaphysical difficulty underlying Corcoran's appeal to God.

The metaphysical difficulty

In order for God to ensure that we survive into the afterlife, God must prevent the second fission product from constituting a life. But this is not

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because the second fission product would then somehow causally disrupt the first. Recall the original fission case in which Etta at t_1 survives as B at t_2. If C at t_2 were also allowed to survive the fission process, then Etta at t_1 would have ceased to exist by time t_2. But the living C at t_2 need not at all causally affect Etta in order to destroy Etta. The life-preserving causal relation between Etta at t_1 and B at t_2 and the life-preserving causal relation between Etta at t_1 and C at t_2 proceed down two independent paths. And the two resulting bodies do not causally act on one another. So, the production of a living C at t_2 makes it the case that Etta does not exist at t_2, without the living C at t_2 causally affecting Etta.

But this seems wrong. If the living C at t_2 is entirely external to and in no way causally affects Etta, then how can the existence of the living C at t_2 make it the case that Etta does not exist at t_2? A body that is spatially and causally isolated from Etta seems metaphysically irrelevant to whether or not Etta continues to exist. Surely C at t_2 must do something to Etta to make it the case that Etta does not exist at t_2. Hence, Corcoran's account faces the metaphysical difficulty of entailing that the existence of Etta depends on factors wholly extrinsic to Etta, where to be wholly extrinsic to Etta is to be spatially and causally isolated from Etta. So, even if it is the case that there is no possible world in which God would allow both fission products to survive, the metaphysical problem remains of explaining why allowing both fission products to survive would destroy a human body. And, of course, Corcoran cannot simply answer that the annihilation would result because that is what his persistence condition entails, for that very condition is what is now in question.

Perhaps a defender of Corcoran's view can respond the following way. The survival of C at t_2 is not as causally irrelevant as I have portrayed it. Granted, C at t_2 does not exert any positive causal force upon Etta at t_1 or B at t_2. However, there is still a destructive causal link between the survival of C at t_2 and Etta at t_1. Etta at t_1 has only a certain amount of causal force that constitutes her life. When that causal force is directed down only one path to a single fission product, B at t_2, Etta's life persists in full strength. But when both fission products survive, the causal force of Etta's life is divided down two separate paths, each product getting only half of Etta's life force. This results in the destruction of Etta because her life no longer has the degree of force it needs to persist. The survival of both fission products, in effect, rips Etta's life apart. Thus, the existence of a living C at t_2 is metaphysically relevant to Etta's survival, even though the former does not exert any causal force upon the latter.

This response, however, is unsatisfying for a couple of reasons. First, it is not clear how one would even begin to measure the relevant life force. The measurement would likely be in terms of causal force, but how does one begin to quantify that force in this context, i.e. one in which the causal force produces a special, self-directing event? Second, even if one were able to quantify a life force, how does one determine the minimal amount required for a life to persist?

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On the above account, the survival of both fission products divides Etta's life force in half, resulting in the destruction of Etta's life. But why think that the threshold for the persistence of a life is above 50 per cent of its current measure? Why not think that one's life could persist if its life force dropped to 49 per cent or 40 per cent or 25 per cent of its current measure? And if the threshold is above 50 per cent, then how high above 50 per cent is it? Does one's life cease to exist if it is at anything less than 100 per cent? If not, where is the threshold, e.g. 99 per cent or 80 per cent or 51 per cent? In short, it is not clear that one can determine, in a non-arbitrary manner, the minimal amount of life-force required for the persistence of a human life.

I have been arguing that Corcoran's account implausibly makes an individual's existence dependent on factors wholly extrinsic to the individual. Now, Corcoran considers a similar concern based on Harold Noonan's 'only *x* and *y* principle', which is, according to Corcoran, 'the claim that whether or not some objects *x* and *y* compose some concrete individual F should have nothing to do with events involving numerically distinct objects that are spatiotemporally segregated from F'.[10] Corcoran, however, contends that his account is in line with Noonan's principle:

> Since I believe that immanent causal connections are what secure identity across time for material objects, it must be the case (assuming the 'only *x* and *y* principle' is true) that there is something in the nature of immanent causal connections that make cases of fission such that the immanent causal relation goes one way, the other, or neither. In other words, there must be something in the nature of immanent causal connections that prevents the relation from ever going both ways.[11]

First, notice that this reply dispenses with Corcoran's original argument that God's benevolent will would never allow the fission process to result in both B at t_2 and C at t_2 being causally related in the life-preserving way to Etta at t_1. On this new argument, the reason why both fission products cannot possibly survive is not found in God's will but, rather, in the nature of immanent causation.

Second, and more importantly, this new account fails to give any independent reason for thinking that immanent causation cannot possibly result in the survival of both fission products. Indeed, Corcoran confesses, 'I frankly admit that I cannot say what ingredient in immanent causation accounts for this.'[12] Hence, Corcoran acknowledges that his theory would conflict with Noonan's principle if it is possible that both fission products survive and, in defence, simply claims that there must be something in the nature of immanent causation that prevents the possibility of both fission products surviving. But without any account of what that something is, or any independent reason for thinking that there must be some such thing, Corcoran's reply is insufficient. All we have is an unsupported declaration that his view must be able to accommodate principles like Noonan's. Therefore, the metaphysical problem remains that Corcoran's account makes

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the existence of an individual dependent on factors wholly extrinsic to the individual.

The uniqueness criterion

Stephen T. Davis provides an alternative way of defending Corcoran's view against the possibility of both fission products surviving. Instead of appealing to God's necessary existence and essential will for the good of His human creatures, Davis suggests an additional criterion of personal identity, i.e. the uniqueness criterion. This criterion states that an Etta-like person in the afterlife is identical with the premortem Etta only if the postmortem Etta-like person is unique. This necessary condition for personal identity requires that there be no other 'exactly-as-qualified' candidates for Ettahood in the afterlife. Davis further elucidates what it means to be 'unique': 'A[n] [Etta]-like person in the afterlife is *not* unique just in case there is another qualitatively similar and equally good candidate for [Ettahood] who was brought into existence in the afterlife through exactly the same causal process as was the first [Etta]-like person.'[13] So, with the uniqueness condition, if both fission products survive, then neither fission product is identical with Etta at t_1 simply because they both fail to meet this necessary condition for being identical with Etta at t_1.

One concern that immediately presents itself is that such a move seems ad hoc. It appears that the only motivation for introducing the uniqueness condition is in order to address the possibility that, on one's criterion of personal identity, there can be two postmortem persons with equal claim to being identical with a single, premortem person. Call this possibility the 'possibility of duplication'. For Corcoran's account, the possibility of duplication is found in the possibility of both fission products surviving. And as was shown with Corcoran's account, the possibility of duplication is a concern because it seems to entail that one's criterion of personal identity violates NMI and makes the existence of an individual dependent on factors wholly extrinsic to the individual. So, the possibility of duplication is problematic, and the uniqueness condition directly addresses it. Indeed, the uniqueness condition seems custom made to respond to the possibility of duplication. And without any independent reason to posit the uniqueness condition, its adoption is, therefore, ad hoc.

Moreover, the introduction of the uniqueness condition is even worse than your average ad hoc response, for it does not even involve a substantial alteration of the original account. By adopting the uniqueness condition, one's criterion of personal identity will not count either of the equally qualified, postmortem candidates as identical with the premortem person. Why one's criterion, in those cases of duplication, counts neither postmortem candidate as identical with the premortem person is not explained, but simply stipulated by the uniqueness condition. Thus, the uniqueness condition does not involve any substantial

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alteration of one's original criterion of personal identity and, therefore, appears to be no more than an attempt to make one's criterion correct by fiat.

But let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that one could motivate an adoption of the uniqueness condition so that an appeal to it would not be ad hoc. Does the uniqueness condition help Corcoran's account address the difficulties that arise from the possibility of both fission products surviving? The answer, I suggest, is no.

The metaphysical difficulty remains

With the uniqueness condition, Corcoran's account still makes an individual's survival dependent on factors wholly extrinsic to the individual. Take the case where only fission product B at t_2 constitutes a life, resulting in the survival of Etta at t_1 as B at t_2. On the uniqueness condition, Etta's survival still depends on whether or not C at t_2 constitutes a life. If both C at t_2 and B at t_2 survive the fission process, then neither fission product will satisfy the uniqueness condition and, therefore, Etta at t_1 will not exist at t_2 because no candidate at t_2 is identical with Etta at t_1. But, as we saw earlier, the survival of C at t_2 need not causally affect B at t_2 or the causal relationship between Etta at t_1 and B at t_2. Thus, with the uniqueness condition, Corcoran's account still makes an individual's survival dependent on factors wholly extrinsic to the individual.

Davis, however, insists that 'identity *can* depend in part on matters that are extrinsic to the persons we are talking about'.[14] Factors wholly extrinsic to an individual can, according to Davis, determine, in part, whether or not a person survives, whether or not a person is identical with any other person at a later time. Davis defends this claim by first distinguishing between non-relational properties and relational properties:

> The first sort are properties like '*x* is healthy', '*x* is a carpenter', and '*x* is forty years old'. Intuitively they seem non-relational because only one property bearer – viz., *x* – is mentioned in each statement. Relational properties would include '*x* is wearing a sweater', '*x* is taller than *y*', and '*x* loves *y*'. In such cases, more than one property bearer is mentioned.[15]

He then derives a rule-of-thumb for determining whether a given property, F, is relational or non-relational: 'a property F is relational if it is possible directly to falsify any such claim as "*x* is F" by showing that the other relevant thing fails (or other relevant things fail) to have the relevant property G (or, in some cases, *have* the relevant property G)'.[16] For example, one can show that Barbara is not a widow by showing that her only husband, George, is still living. So, on the above rule, 'being a widow' is a relational property. On the other hand, I can have the property of being a male without that property entailing some contingent truth about any other thing and its properties. So, there is no way directly to falsify the

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claim that I am a male by showing that some other relevant item lacks some relevant property, and, therefore, 'being a male' is not a relational property according to the above rule.

With this rule, and the fact that there are relational properties, Davis claims, '[i]t follows that some properties are such that whether a given property bearer has them is in part a function of whether certain other property bearers have (or do not have) certain other properties'.[17] And this conclusion seems correct. Barbara's being a widow does not depend solely on Barbara's own, intrinsic properties; it also depends on George's properties, i.e. whether or not George has the property of being alive. Furthermore, George can have or lack the property of being alive without in anyway causally affecting Barbara. Thus, some properties are such that whether an individual has them or not is in part a function of factors wholly extrinsic to the individual.

Davis then returns to the properties '*x* is identical with *y*' and '*x* has survived death':

> We can now see that they are, contrary to what we might have expected, relational properties. It is possible to falsify claims like '[Etta] has survived death' by showing that two or more afterlife persons share a certain property, viz., 'being completely plausible afterlife candidates for [Ettahood]'. Whether [Etta] has survived death does not depend merely on the intrinsic properties of [Etta].[18]

Davis thinks he has thus answered the charge that the uniqueness condition absurdly makes the survival of an individual dependent on factors wholly extrinsic to the individual. He says, 'My reply is that this result is odd but not absurd, that uniqueness is a criterion of personal identity, that properties such as ''survives death'' and ''is identical with [Etta]'' are relational properties (which is the cause of the oddness noted above)'.[19] So, the uniqueness condition does make the survival of an individual dependent in part on factors wholly extrinsic to the individual, but that just means that properties like '*x* is identical with *y*' and '*x* has survived death' are relational properties. Consequently, the apparent absurdity of such a dependence is really only an oddness that results from not expecting properties like '*x* is identical to *y*' and '*x* has survived death' to be relational properties.

This reply, however, does not give us any good reason to think that an individual's survival can depend in part on factors wholly extrinsic to the individual. Davis grants that the uniqueness condition makes an individual's survival depend in part on factors wholly extrinsic to the individual. He then shows how this consequence of adopting the uniqueness condition can be described in terms of 'relational properties'. But the fact remains that this consequence is problematic, and the new terminology only forces one to introduce more terms in order to make the absurdity of the consequence once again obvious.

One can further divide Davis's relational properties into two groups, which I will call 'purely-relational properties' and 'semi-relational properties'.

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Purely-relational properties can be gained or lost without the individual being causally affected by the relevant external factors. Semi-relational properties cannot be gained or lost without the individual being causally affected by the relevant external factors. By 'relevant external factors' I simply mean the external factors that directly determine, in part, whether or not an individual has a certain relational property.

An example of a purely relational property is 'being taller than Mickey Rooney'. An individual that is six feet tall can lose the relational property 'being taller than Mickey Rooney' without the relevant external factor causally affecting the individual. If, for example, Mickey Rooney were to suddenly grow seven feet, then the individual in question would no longer be taller than Mickey Rooney, even though Mickey Rooney and his growth spurt in no way causally affect the individual. An example of a semi-relational property would be 'being stabbed by Mickey Rooney'. The relational property 'being stabbed by Mickey Rooney' cannot be gained by an individual without that individual being causally affected by the relevant external-factors. Mickey Rooney and his weapon must causally impact an individual in order for that individual to be stabbed by Mickey Rooney.

With this distinction between purely relational properties and semi-relational properties, let us return to the property 'being unique'. B at t_2 will loose the property of being unique if C at t_2 survives the fission process as well, which can occur without C at t_2 causally affecting B at t_2. So, B at t_2 can loose the property 'being unique' without the relevant external-factor, C at t_2, causally affecting B at t_2.[20] Therefore, the property 'being unique' is a purely relational property. But the uniqueness condition requires that B at t_2 be unique in order for Etta at t_1 to survive as B at t_2. So, the uniqueness condition entails that Etta's survival depends on a purely relational property, which gives us the same metaphysical problem, just in different terminology: How can the survival of an individual depend on a purely relational property? An individual's possession of a purely relational property depends on external factors that do not causally affect the individual. But factors that are wholly extrinsic to an individual seem metaphysically irrelevant to the individual's survival. Thus, we have the exact same problem in its original force.

Perhaps Davis would respond that he is not claiming that he has proven that an individual's survival depends on factors wholly extrinsic to the individual. Rather, Davis may argue, he has shown that some properties can in fact depend on factors wholly extrinsic to the individual and, therefore, it is not absurd to claim that the properties 'survives death' and 'is identical to Etta' depend on factors wholly extrinsic to the individual. In short, the concept of a purely relational property is not an incoherent or absurd concept and, therefore, it is not incoherent or absurd to claim that the properties 'survives death' and 'is identical to Etta' are purely relational properties.

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The problem, however, is that Davis provides no reason to think that 'survives death' and 'is identical to Etta' are purely relational properties. Indeed, we have reason to deny that these properties are purely relational properties. Such a classification of those properties entails that an individual's existence depends on factors wholly extrinsic to that individual, which seems implausible. Moreover, just because the concept of a purely rational property is coherent, it does not follow that it is coherent to apply that concept to the properties 'survives death' and 'is identical to Etta'. The concept of a square is coherent, but it is nonetheless absurd to assert that circles are squares.

Necessity of metaphysical identity still violated

With the uniqueness condition, Corcoran's account still violates NMI. Take the original case in which only fission product B at t_2 survives. According to Corcoran's condition for the persistence of human bodies and the uniqueness condition, Etta at t_1 is identical to B at t_2. Now, it seems possible that C at t_2 survive as well. Corcoran attempts to deny this possibility by appealing to God's necessary existence and God's essential will for the good of God's human creatures. But this attempt suffers from the metaphysical difficulty of making the existence of an individual dependent on factors wholly extrinsic to the individual. As for the uniqueness condition, it does not even challenge the possibility of both fission products surviving. Rather, the uniqueness condition just entails that if that possibility were actual, then Etta at t_1 would not be identical to B at t_2 because B at t_2 would not be unique. So, with the uniqueness condition, it is still possible that Etta at t_1 not be identical to B at t_2. Therefore, Corcoran's persistence condition for a human body, even with the uniqueness condition, still violates NMI.

Davis, however, agrees with NMI and so denies that the uniqueness condition violates it. Here is his argument:

> Suppose that the Stephen Davis who writes these lines in 1999 (call him SD2) is identical to the Stephen Davis (call him SD1) who saw Claremont for the first time in 1965. Now if 'SD1 = SD2', then by the necessity of identity, it follows that 'N [SD1 = SD2]'. But if that statement is true, doesn't it follow that the statement 'God permanently and completely annihilates Stephen Davis in December 1975' is not only false but necessarily false? But that seems false, no? Didn't God have it within God's power, in December 1975, to annihilate me permanently and completely? The lesson that I draw from this argument is that identity of one person with a later person, necessary though it is, depends on certain contingencies (like God not deciding to annihilate me in December 1975).[21]

With this argument, Davis claims that the uniqueness criterion does not violate the necessity of metaphysical identity, but simply has identity over time dependent on certain contingencies, such as whether or not God makes it the case that a later individual is not unique.

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This argument, however, is invalid. The truth of the statement 'N [SD1 = SD2]' does not entail that the statement 'God permanently and completely annihilates Stephen Davis in December 1975' is necessarily false. The statement 'Necessarily, SD1 is identical to SD2' does not entail the statement 'Necessarily, SD2 exists'. So, the statement 'Necessarily, SD1 is identical to SD2' is consistent with the statement 'Possibly, SD2 does not exist'. It follows, then, that the statement 'Necessarily, SD1 is identical to SD2' is consistent with the statement 'Possibly, God permanently and completely annihilates Stephen Davis in December 1975'. Hence, 'Necessarily, SD1 is identical to SD2' does not entail 'Necessarily, it is not the case that God permanently and completely annihilates Stephen Davis in December 1975'. Therefore, Davis invalidly infers from the truth of the statement 'N [SD1 = SD2]' that the statement 'God permanently and completely annihilates Stephen Davis in December 1975' is necessarily false.

What then of the lesson that Davis draws from his argument? In light of the invalidity of his argument, I think we can take a different lesson. The lesson is that just because the existence of an individual depends on certain contingencies, it does not follow that that individual being identical to a certain, later person (if he is identical to any later person) depends on those contingencies. If Stephen Davis were destroyed in 1975, then Stephen Davis would not exist in 1999, and so would not have written those lines in 1999. Thus, Stephen Davis's existence in 1999 does depend on the contingent fact that God does not permanently annihilate Stephen Davis in December 1975. However, if Stephen Davis were annihilated in December 1975, it remains the case that Stephen Davis, if he is identical to any later person, is identical to the Stephen Davis who actually wrote those lines in 1999 (SD2). What would follow from the 1975 destruction of Stephen Davis is that SD2 does not exist either. There could still be someone named 'Stephen Davis' who writes those same lines in 1999. That person, however, would not be SD2 because SD2 is numerically identical to the Stephen Davis who, due to God's destructive act, would not exist in 1999. Thus, Stephen Davis's existence in 1999 clearly depends on the contingent fact that God does not permanently annihilate Stephen Davis in December 1975, but Stephen Davis's being identical to the Stephen Davis who actually wrote those lines in 1999 (if he is identical to any later person) does not depend on that contingency.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that Corcoran's account both violates NMI and makes an individual's existence dependent on factors wholly extrinsic to the individual. Both of these consequences, I suggest, make the account unacceptable. I have considered not only Corcoran's defence but also Stephen Davis's suggestions on how an account like Corcoran's can defend itself against these concerns. Neither, however, managed to avoid either the above consequences

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or their implausibility. Therefore, there is good reason to conclude that Corcoran fails to provide a plausible account of how one can be a physicalist about human persons, deny temporal gaps in the existence of persons, and hold that there is an afterlife. In the end, we just might have to have soul to survive.

Notes

1. Kevin Corcoran 'Physical persons and postmortem survival without temporal gaps', in *idem* (ed.) *Soul, Body, and Survival: Essays on the Metaphysics of Human Persons* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 206.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, 207.
4. *Ibid.*, 209.
5. *Ibid.*, 210.
6. *Ibid.*
7. The violation of NMI can also be shown the following way. According to Corcoran's persistence condition for a human body, if only one fission product survives, then Etta at t_1 will be identical to that fission product. However, it is possible that either fission product be the sole survivor. So, if only fission product B at t_2 survives, then Etta at t_1 is identical to B at t_2 and yet could have been identical to a numerically different body (C at t_2). Thus, Etta's being identical to B at t_2 is contingent and, therefore, Corcoran's persistence condition for a human body violates NMI.
8. Corcoran 'Physical persons', 215.
9. For those who have difficulty with the notion of moral perfection, the point works just as well if God is essentially, maximally, morally good.
10. Corcoran 'Physical persons', 216; Harold Noonan *Personal Identity* (London: Routledge, 1989), 152.
11. Corcoran 'Physical persons', 216.
12. *Ibid.*
13. Stephen T. Davis 'Physicalism and resurrection', in Corcoran *Soul, Body, and Survival*, 240.
14. *Ibid.*, 241.
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.*, 242.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*, 243.
19. *Ibid.*
20. One may think that C at t_2 is not the only relevant external-factor for B at t_2 being unique. All human bodies at t_2 are relevant to B at t_2 being unique, for if any one of those bodies shares in the same life-preserving causal relation that B at t_2 has with Etta at t_1, then B at t_2 is not unique. Even so, none of this entails that any of those human bodies causally affect B at t_2 and, therefore, it is still the case that B at t_2 can lose the property 'being unique' without the relevant external factors causally affecting B at t_2.
21. Davis 'Physicalism and resurrection', 243.

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