

# HUMAN ORGANISMS AND THE SURVIVAL OF DEATH

A SYSTEMATIC EVALUATION OF THE POSSIBILITY OF LIFE AFTER  
DEATH GIVEN ANIMALISM

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Jan 2017

## ABSTRACT

Many animalists assert the following propositions:

- (1) We are human organisms.
- (2) For any organism  $O_1$  at a time,  $t_1$ , and for any organism  $O_2$  at a time,  $t_2$ ,  $O_1$  and  $O_2$  are identical if and only if the simples that compose  $O_1$  and the simples that compose  $O_2$  are constituents of the same life.
- (3) We will die.

Christians assert the following proposition:

- (4) We will exist (after our deaths) on the Last Day.

Propositions (1)–(4) are rendered logically inconsistent if the following two propositions are true:

- (A) Necessarily, the life of an organism,  $O_1$ , at one time,  $t_1$ , is identical with the life of an organism,  $O_2$ , at another time,  $t_2$ , if and only if, the simples that compose  $O_1$  and the simples that compose  $O_2$  are immanent-causally connected.

and

- (B) Necessarily, when we die the simples that last composed us will cease to bear any immanent-causal connection to any organism.

If (A) is true, then for us (human organisms) to exist on the Last Day (proposition (4)) the simples that compose us at the moment of our deaths need to bear some immanent-causal connection to an organism that exists on the Last Day. If (B) is true, however, then when we die (proposition (3)) the simples that compose us cease to bear any immanent-causal connection to any organism. Both (A) and (B) are, it is argued, true on animalism. In consequence, it is argued that necessarily, for any human organism,  $O$ , if  $O$  has died then  $O$  can never exist again. It is also argued, therefore, that it is unreasonable to believe (1)–(4) and, therefore, it is unreasonable to be both an animalist and a Christian.

Christian animalists (and their sympathisers) have recently responded to arguments of this kind by arguing that (A) and (B) are false; in particular, they have described possible scenarios at which (A) or (B) are false but at which human organisms survive their death. That is, they not only demonstrate that (A) and (B) are false but also that (1)–(4) are not logically inconsistent.

In this thesis, my overall argument is that, while animalists may have demonstrated that it is possible for an organism that has died to exist again on the Last Day by demonstrating that (A) and (B) are false, they have not demonstrated that it is reasonable to believe that an organism that has died can exist again on the Last Day. This is because the worlds at which (A) or (B) are false may be possibilities, but they are not possibilities that it is reasonable to believe may be actual.

I carry out this project as follows. In Part I, I state what I take animalism to be, what animalists take our persistence conditions to be, what animalists take death to be and what Christians take (minimally) life after death to be. In Part II, I state what I call the ‘problem of life after death’ and the, more specific, ‘logical problem of life after death’. Put simply, the ‘logical problem of life after death’ states that, given that (A) and (B) are true, propositions (1)–(4) are logically inconsistent and it is, in consequence, unreasonable to believe in life after death, given animalism. I then respond to the logical problem of life after death on behalf of the animalist; I argue that it is unsound because (A) and (B) are false. In Part III, among other things, I argue that while animalists may have responded to the logical problem of life after death, and assuming that modal scepticism (the view that we should be sceptical about our justifiably asserting certain exotic modal claims) is false, the more general problem of life after death remains. Put simply, the more general problem of life after death states that, while (1)–(4) are not logically inconsistent, it is still not reasonable to believe (1)–(4) simultaneously.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people who have supported my writing this thesis in a number of different ways. I would like to thank them here. First, I would like to thank my wife, Ruth. Ruth has never agreed with much of what Peter van Inwagen has had to say about anything, but she does agree with him when he writes,

[o]ne in fact doesn't want one's mind to be fully awake [as is the case when one is engaging in metaphysics] any very high proportion of the time—if for no other reason, because when one's mind is fully awake, one's capacities for interacting with other human beings in all sorts of important ways will be asleep (van Inwagen 2014b, 18).

Ruth has been a great support to me whether my mind has been fully awake or asleep.

Second, I would like to thank Drs Daniel Hill and Stephen McLeod. I could not have asked for a better supervisory team. I would like to thank both for their extremely rigorous evaluation of my arguments and friendly guidance. I would also like to thank Dr Jon Loose. Jon has been a particularly helpful conversation partner over the course of my PhD study and has helped me to develop some of the views that I present in this thesis.

Third, large sections of this thesis have already been published in a number of journals. I would like to thank several anonymous reviewers for *Sophia*, *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* and *Religious Studies* for their astute thoughts. I would also like to thank the publisher for *Sophia* and *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*—Springer—for allowing me to include some of my publications in this work.

Fourth, I have had some very helpful input from several philosophers and graduate students in philosophy along the way. In particular, I would like to thank Prof. Barry Dainton, Dr Ian Dunbar, Prof. Richard Gaskin, Dr Philip Goff, Rachael Handley, Matt Hart, Greg Miller, Ruthie Miller, Prof. Eric Olson, Dr Attila Tanyi, Dr J.T. Turner and Dr Tom Winfield for their helpful conversations. I would also like to thank audiences at the University of Birmingham, Boston University, the University of Helsinki, Heythrop College, the University of Hull, the Institute of Philosophy, the University of Liverpool, the University of Niagara, Oak Hill Theological College, the University of Tübingen and the Tyndale Fellowship's Philosophy of Religion group. Folk present for my presentations at these institutions had some extremely helpful things to say regarding many different areas of this thesis. I would also like to thank those present at the 'Exploring the Interim State' workshop. Conversations with folk at this workshop greatly influenced the direction of this thesis.

Fifth, I would also like to thank my mother, father, brother and sisters. All have very inquiring minds and I have been very encouraged by their support and, on many occasions, their helpfully humbling me. There are several other individuals who have supported me in many ways throughout my time as a graduate student as though they were family. They are, Hazel Raw, Audrey Thomas, Rev. Chris and Mrs Imogen Slater, Debbie Woods, Philip and Jean Almond, Rev. Dan and Mrs Sue Young, Rev. Dr Lee Gatiss and Rev. Mel Lacy.

Finally, I would thank He who will present me—body and soul—holy and blameless on the Last Day. I am promised that He will not only achieve this great feat, but that He is also working all things for the good of those who love Him. I am comforted by the fact that even this study may be one of those things.

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## INTRODUCTION

Materialists or physicalists, for the purposes of this thesis, should be understood as those folk who believe that we, human persons, are composite objects that are composed entirely of material parts.<sup>1</sup> Traditionally, Christians have been substance dualists. Substance dualists believe one of two things. They believe that either there are material objects and immaterial objects but that we are among the immaterial objects (souls), or that there are material objects and immaterial objects but that we are composite objects, composed of both material objects and an immaterial object (a soul).<sup>2</sup> Call the left-hand side of the above disjunction ‘the simple soul view’ and the right-hand side of the above disjunction ‘the material-immaterial composite view’ or ‘the composite view’ for short.<sup>3</sup>

These traditional views have recently been challenged by a number of contemporary Christian philosophers and theologians, most notably: Peter van Inwagen (1990; 1995; 1998b), Lynne Rudder Baker (1995; 2007), Hud Hudson (2001), Trenton Merricks (2001; 2006), Kevin Corcoran (2006; 2001b), Nancey Murphy (2006), Joel Green (2008) and Greg Bahnsen (1972) In its place, they aim to offer a materialist alternative. Call these folk ‘Christian materialists.’

The motivations for challenging the traditional Christian view and accepting a materialist alternative are numerous. The most common objection to substance dualism that I receive from the Christian laity and theologians is that belief in substance dualism entails some false Gnostic or Platonic belief.<sup>4</sup> In general, I regard arguments such as these as fallacious, since the substance dualist can agree that the Gnostics and the Platonists were substance dualists but deny that belief in substance dualism entails any of the false beliefs held by Gnostics or Platonists. For example,

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<sup>1</sup> Physicalism is different from materialism. The physicalist can include non-material physical things like forces as objects in her ontology, the materialist cannot. For the purposes of this thesis I will use the two terms interchangeably. Where possible, however, I will only use the term ‘materialism.’ I use the terms interchangeably because van Inwagen, as far as I can tell, uses the terms interchangeably. I will use ‘materialism’ where possible because van Inwagen uses ‘materialism’ more frequently than ‘physicalism’. In particular, my main target in this thesis are those materialists who believe that there are simple material objects (i.e., not gunk theorists).

<sup>2</sup> There are, of course, some Christians who believe that there are only immaterial objects; idealists. I leave them out of consideration in this thesis.

<sup>3</sup> I assume throughout this thesis that souls are simple: i.e., that they do not have any proper parts.

<sup>4</sup> Or, at least, like van Inwagen, they suspect that ‘dualism is a Greek import into Christianity’ (van Inwagen 1995, 475).

the Christian lay person that I have in mind may argue that the belief that one's soul can be separated from one's body is a belief held by Platonists and Gnostics. Platonists and Gnostics also thought that one's soul was better off without one's body. Therefore, Christians that are substance dualists accept an account of the nature of human persons that entails a false belief; namely, that one's soul is better off without one's body. This argument is obviously fallacious. The substance dualist can agree with Plato that one can exist without one's body, but it hardly follows from this belief that one's soul is, therefore, better off without one's body. I have yet to read a plausible charge of 'Platonism' or 'Gnosticism' brought against the substance dualist.

The predominant reason for the rejection of substance dualism by Christians (especially Christians in the academy), however, is due to a commitment to a form of methodological naturalism. By and large Christian materialists have accepted a form of *local* methodological naturalism.<sup>5</sup> Methodological naturalism, put simply, is the view that in answer to the question 'what entities are there?' the response should be 'those entities that our best scientific theories commit us to'. *Local* methodological naturalism is the view that methodological naturalism is true at least with regard to the human person. In answer to the question 'what entities compose persons?' local methodological naturalists answer 'those entities that our best scientific theories commit us to'. The argument then proceeds: since our best scientific theories do not commit us to belief in the existence of souls, we should not believe in the existence of souls. As Lynne Rudder Baker puts it,

I believe that immaterialism [what I have been calling substance dualism] should be rejected. My reason for rejecting immaterialism has...to do...with the natural world. Immaterial souls just do not fit with what we know about the natural world. We human persons evolved by natural selection (even if God actualized this world on the basis of His foreknowledge of the outcome). Immaterial souls would simply stand out as surds in the natural world. (Baker 2007, 341)

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<sup>5</sup> It is not clear to me what local methodological naturalism is. I do not see a better way to characterise the Christian materialist's position, however.

In short, Christian materialists believe that substance dualism should be rejected because souls do not fit with our current understanding of the natural world.<sup>6</sup> Souls, rather, stand out as objects that cannot be accounted for by the natural sciences and, in consequence, should be rejected. This argument is not likely to convince the Christian substance dualist. She will likely respond that methodological naturalism is flawed. The Christian has reasons to reject it, reasons independent of belief in the existence of the soul. Alternatively, the Christian will find an acceptance of local methodological naturalism *ad hoc*. Why not accept a methodological naturalism with regard to the whole created order? Why believe in angels and other non-human spirits?

Some Christian philosophers (and non-Christian philosophers) have, however, in my view, offered some more persuasive philosophical arguments against substance dualism. Peter van Inwagen, for example, gives a number of philosophically astute arguments both for the denial of substance dualism and for materialism (see van Inwagen (1993a)). In particular, van Inwagen gives ‘four good arguments for physicalism’ (van Inwagen 1993, 178). These are the ‘interaction argument’, the ‘argument from common speech’, the ‘remote control argument’ and the ‘duplication argument’. Van Inwagen writes of this last argument, the ‘duplication argument’, that it ‘is the single argument for physicalism that I find the most persuasive’ (van Inwagen 1993, 180). These arguments do not assume methodological naturalism but, rather, are arguments to the effect that there is some internal incoherence in the notion of one’s being a soul.<sup>7</sup> I will not rehearse these arguments here. This is because these arguments, and others, have been well-worn and, I think, responded to. Van Inwagen himself, for example, notes that ‘[t]hese arguments convinced no one’ (van Inwagen 2007, 206). I think that those who were not convinced by his arguments were right not to be.

Some Christian materialists have argued that substance dualism is not merely anti-scientific but that it is not given the scriptural support that many exegetes thought it

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<sup>6</sup> This is more radical than the expression of *local* methodological naturalism outlined above. On Baker’s account angels or non-human spirits, for example, are also surds in nature and so we should not be committed to their existence.

<sup>7</sup> These arguments do not concern hylomorphic substance dualism.

had.<sup>8</sup> This argument is not so much an argument against substance dualism but an attempt to remove support for substance dualism.

Scripture is perhaps the most fruitful place to begin discussion among Christian believers (especially evangelicals) about our nature. If Scripture is one's supreme authority on all matters of truth and if the debate about what we are has been settled by appeal to Scripture, then we should take the debate to have been settled.

Appeal to Scripture, however, has proven to be problematic. I, for example, think that the Scriptural data is more consistent with a substance-dualist view of the human person than a materialist one.<sup>9</sup> I find that the following passages good support for the truth of substance dualism individually and cumulatively: Ecclesiastes 12:7; Matthew 10:28; Luke 16:22-28 Luke 23:43; John 19:30; 2 Corinthians 5:1-9; Philippians 1:20-24; Hebrews 12:22-23; 1 Peter 3:18-20; Revelation 6:9-11; Revelation 20:4.

Materialists offer their own interpretations of these passages.<sup>10</sup> Of course, rather than arguing that these passages (or others) support materialism, materialists tend to argue that these passages (and others) underdetermine which view about our nature is correct.

In this case, consensus about which view is true (substance dualism or materialism) will not (so it appears) likely be settled by appeal to Scripture alone. Some are happy, in this instance, to defer to tradition. By this I mean that in cases where Scripture does not determine whether a particular view is true and we have no compelling reasons one way or the other, one has warrant to believe that the orthodox view is true until one has compelling reasons to reject it. As Peter van Inwagen points out, the orthodox view has largely been substance dualism<sup>11</sup> or, at least, it has been, until the twentieth century, largely left unchallenged. He writes, 'no ecumenical council or denominational synod or inquisitorial office or faculty of theology, no Pope or

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<sup>8</sup> See especially Green (2008), van Inwagen (1995) and Cooper (1989).

<sup>9</sup> One may think that this is an understatement. One may think that to affirm certain passages of Scripture one needs to believe in the existence of souls. Matthew 10:28 seems to be an obvious example. I do not know what Matthew 10:28 could mean on a materialist reading (Cooper seems to agree (Cooper 1989, 117–119)). Van Inwagen does offer an argument in defence of materialism in the light of Matt. 10:28 but I find it unpersuasive. In short his argument is that one can understand the (proverbial) spirit of the passage even if one thinks that Matthew's utterance is literally false. I am not so sure. The reader can decide (see (van Inwagen 1995, 482)).

<sup>10</sup> See, again, Green (2008) and van Inwagen (1995).

<sup>11</sup> Hylomorphism is, of course, an orthodox view too. The materialists I have in mind tend to reject hylomorphism.

archbishop or reformer, has, to my knowledge, condemned dualism *per se*' (van Inwagen 1995, 487). Many, however, are not happy to defer to the orthodox view. They either think that tradition should play no part in determining which beliefs we should hold to be true, or else they think that there are compelling reasons to reject tradition. Van Inwagen, I believe, thinks the latter: at least in this instance he thinks that there are compelling reasons to reject tradition.

The question remains: if the jury is out (for one reason or another) with regard to whether philosophical argument alone can settle the debate about what we are, and if one does not want to appeal to tradition, then what is left for the substance dualist to do? How are we to decide which view is true in this case?

To my mind there is one option left. One can try to demonstrate that materialism and a Christian belief are incompatible.<sup>12</sup> This thesis begins at this juncture. In order to demonstrate that materialism is incompatible with Christian belief one can (rather than demonstrating that the view is unScriptural, unorthodox or philosophically problematic) demonstrate that there is a particular Christian belief that conflicts with materialism. What Christian beliefs may be incompatible with materialism? I think that they include the belief that God is essentially tri-personal<sup>13</sup> and the belief that we can survive our deaths.

This thesis considers the second of these beliefs, namely, that we can survive our deaths. In particular, this thesis defends the claim that it is not reasonable to believe in the possibility of life after death given (a certain form of) materialism.

Materialism, however, comes in a variety of forms. I cannot consider all forms of materialism in this thesis. This is primarily because it would take too long. The focus of this thesis will be the materialist view known as 'animalism'. Among all the materialist views out there I take animalism as my target for a number of reasons. My main reason for taking animalism as my target is because I think that if any materialist metaphysics of the human person is true, it will be a form of animalism. Animalism has a vast number of theoretical virtues that, I think, are missing in other materialist

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<sup>12</sup> If one allows emotion or aesthetics to settle metaphysical debates, then one may appeal to these sources too. I will not.

<sup>13</sup> See Leftow (2015). In particular, Leftow has Trenton Merricks' version of animalist Christology in mind here.

metaphysics of the human person such as property dualism, four-dimensional materialism, the brain view or the constitution view (which is animalism's main rival). I will not rehearse these virtues now, nor at any point in this thesis.<sup>14</sup> This thesis assumes that if any materialist account of the human person is true it will likely be animalism.

One should not, however, worry too much about the limited scope of this thesis. Much of what I say in this thesis, I think, can be quite easily applied to other materialist accounts of the human person; in particular, materialist accounts of the human person that require there to be causal continuity between a human person that exists at one time and a human person that exists at another time. Moreover, I think that any plausible account of materialism with regard to the human person will require there to be causal continuity between human persons, and so my arguments can apply to all of those accounts of materialism with regard to the human person.<sup>15</sup>

Animalism itself, however, also comes in a variety of forms (as will be discussed).<sup>16</sup> This thesis will focus on Peter van Inwagen's expression of animalism in his book *Material Beings*.<sup>17</sup> This is for two reasons. First, van Inwagen is a *Christian* animalist and so he has a particular interest in providing an animalist theory that is consistent with the belief in life after death. Moreover, second, besides some controversial points regarding the existence of ordinary objects, other animalists have taken their lead from van Inwagen's work. Eric Olson, for example, assured me that his version of animalism and van Inwagen's version of animalism are nigh-on identical.<sup>18</sup> In Part I, I will clarify precisely the kind of animalism with which this thesis is concerned.

I am now in a position to state my thesis:

**Thesis statement:**

it is unreasonable to believe in the possibility of life after death given animalism.

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<sup>14</sup> I direct one to (Olson 2007, 48–75) for an assessment of some animalist virtues over and against the virtue of constitutionalism.

<sup>15</sup> Zimmerman writes, '[b]ut most metaphysicians seem to agree with van Inwagen that there must be a causal element in any adequate "criterion of identity" for persisting material objects' (Zimmerman 1999, 195).

<sup>16</sup> For full and thorough discussion see Bailey (2015), Thornton (2016), Blatti (2014) and Olson (2015).

<sup>17</sup> It should be noted that, as far as I am aware, van Inwagen never uses the term 'animalism' to refer to his view. His view is, however, taken to be a form of animalism by animalists and non-animalists alike.

<sup>18</sup> Personal correspondence.

The following chapters all contribute to defending the above thesis. This thesis is split into three parts. In Part I will better define animalism and some of the relevant concepts needed for this thesis, namely, the concepts of personal identity across time, death and life after death. In Part II, I will state my argument against animalism and a version of the argument already found in the literature. The argument already found in the literature I will call ‘the argument from the logical problem of life after death’; the argument that I will advance is ‘the argument from the problem of life after death’. In Part II I will then consider some responses to these arguments that are already available in the literature. In Part III I put forward several new arguments in defence of my thesis.

Before I embark on this project however, I must outline some assumptions that I will hold throughout this thesis. For the purposes of this thesis these assumptions should not be considered controversial. Most of the assumptions that I will make as also are assumed by my primary interlocutor; van Inwagen.<sup>19</sup>

### **Assumptions**

In van Inwagen’s preface to *Material Beings* and in the book’s précis van Inwagen puts forward several assumptions. These assumptions can be stated as follows:

- (i) The classical view of the identity relation is true.
- (ii) Three-dimensionalism and endurantism are true.
- (iii) I will adhere to standard logic as an ideal.
- (iv) I will not adopt a counterpart-theoretical understanding of modal statements about individuals.
- (v) Matter is particulate.
- (vi) *Two* objects cannot be composed of exactly the same (proper) parts at the same time.
- (vii) In the case of any particular episode of thought or sensation, there must be a thing, one thing, that is doing the thinking and feeling.
- (viii) Objects such as Descartes, you, and I, are material objects.
- (ix) What there is is never a matter of stipulation or convention.

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<sup>19</sup> See van Inwagen (1993b; van Inwagen 1990, 3–13).

- (x) Whether certain objects add up to or compose some larger object does not depend on anything besides the spatial and causal relations they bear to one another.

I will make all of these assumptions except (viii). This will not matter for the purposes of this thesis. Van Inwagen merely assumes (viii), as far as I can tell, so that he need not spend time arguing against any non-materialist theses. I take it that he thinks that he has successfully done this elsewhere.

Perhaps, the most controversial of the above assumptions are (ii) and (v). I will not argue for (ii) or (v). This, again, should not matter for the purposes of this thesis. The primary aim of this thesis is to demonstrate that it is unreasonable, given van Inwagen's materialist metaphysics of the human person and the assumptions that he holds to be true, to believe in the possibility of life after death.

## PART I – HUMAN ORGANISMS

Before I introduce the problem of life after death four things are in order. First, I must state the view that I am considering in this thesis as clearly as possible. In Chapter 1, I will outline what I take ‘animalism’ to be and the metaphysics of material constitution that underlies it. Second, since I am interested in the survival of human persons I must identify what the persistence conditions of human persons are given animalism (Chapter 2). Third, since I am interested not merely in how human persons persist from one moment to the next but, specifically, how human persons persist from one moment to the next with death occurring in between, I must state what animalists take the death of human persons to be (Chapter 3). Fourth, in this thesis I am interested in a particular kind of life after death: the kind spoken of in, for example, the early creeds of Christianity. I must, in consequence, describe what kind of life after death this is (Chapter 3).

I will discuss these four things in the following three chapters. These three chapters will form the foundation upon which I will launch the problem of life after death. That is, having outlined what animalism is, what animalists propose our persistence conditions to be, what animalists propose amounts to death, and what kind of life after death I am interested in, I will be able to show that, given animalism (or, at least, a particularly popular version of animalism), it is unreasonable to believe that we, human persons, can live after death.

## CHAPTER 1 – MATERIAL CONSTITUTION

First, then, what is animalism? Animalism can be expressed using the following sentence (call this the central ‘animalist assertion’):

(AA) We are human organisms.

Let us consider each constituent part of that sentence.

### 1.1 ‘We’

First, consider the word ‘we’. ‘We’ refers to ‘those things to which we ordinarily refer with our personal pronouns’ (Bailey 2015, 867). Things like, for example, philosophers; you and me, David Lewis and Timothy Williamson. One thing that these things all have in common is that, at some point in time, they have all been (or are) *persons*. Animalists, in general, hold that the concept person is a *phased sortal concept*. A phased sortal concept ‘is a concept to which its instances belong temporarily, for a phase of their existence’ (Blatti 2014, sect. 2.2). I am, for example, a postgraduate student. By registering for a postgraduate degree at the University of Liverpool something that was not a postgraduate student (namely, me) became a postgraduate student. I, however, will cease to be a postgraduate student if I graduate, withdraw or die.

Animalists think that a thing can lose or acquire the psychological capacities that are jointly necessary and sufficient for personhood (e.g., the capacities for intelligent thought, for reason and reflection and for considering oneself as oneself, the same thinking thing, in different times and places (cf. Locke 1979, 335). When we (human organisms) possess these capacities, so the animalist says, we can rightly say that we are persons. When we lose these capacities, we cannot rightly (indeed we likely will not be able to) say that we are persons. We, however, are not necessarily the only things that are persons (in this sense). As Olson points out, animalism is consistent with the view that there are ‘people who are not animals (gods or angels, say)’ (Olson 2007, 24); beings that can also possess the psychological capacities constitutive of personhood.

If we may be persons for a time shorter than our existence, then we are not *essentially* persons. Olson gives a rather short argument that, I take it, supports the

claim that we are only persons for a time shorter than our existence and, hence, that we are not essentially persons. (Olson takes this argument to be an argument for a related claim discussed in a moment but it can, equally, be taken to support the claim that we are not essentially persons.) Olson writes,

when you lapse into a persistent vegetative state, the human animal associated with you appears to survive. There is still a living human animal there even after your psychological features have been completely and irrevocably destroyed; your life-sustaining functions were never disrupted. With its mind destroyed, that animal might not have much of a 'life'. There is nothing it is *like* to be that animal. But it is clearly a biological organism, alive in the same sense as a goldfish or a rosebush is alive. Nor does it seem that one animal has ceased to exist and been replaced by a new and numerically different animal. Hence, the animal that survives the loss of its mental properties is you, if you are an animal, and so you can persist without psychological continuity of any kind. Perhaps we cannot properly call that vegetable animal a *person*, since it has none of those psychological features that distinguish people from non-people (rationality, the capacity for self-consciousness, or what have you). If so, that simply shows that you can continue to exist without being a person, just as you could continue to exist without being a philosopher, or a student, or a fancier of fast cars (Olson 1999, 17).

Put simply, if we (human organisms) can enter a persistent vegetative state, and if when we enter a persistent vegetative state we do not possess the psychological capacities required for personhood, then we are not persons essentially; something cannot possess certain properties essentially and then exist without them. The above quotation from Olson, however, may also be taken as demonstration that 'psychological continuity is neither necessary nor sufficient for a human animal to persist' (Olson 1999, 17). This is because we persist (in this scenario) as human organisms with none of the relevant psychological capacities for personhood. I will say something more positive about what the animalist understands our persistence conditions to be in a moment.

The two questions 'what are we essentially?' and 'how do we persist?' may be related. If the kind that we belong to is defined in terms of persistence conditions,

then<sup>20</sup> whether we belong to a certain kind will depend on what our persistence conditions are. I will return to the animalist answer to the question ‘how do we persist?’ in Chapter 2. In this thesis, however, I do not assume that the kind that we belong to *needs* to be defined in terms of persistence conditions.<sup>21</sup> However, it should be noted that the animalist position with which this thesis is primarily concerned defends biological persistence conditions.

## 1.2 ‘Are’

Second, consider the word ‘are’ in the sentence ‘we are human organisms’. The sentence ‘we are human organisms’ is the first-person-plural present-tense form of the sentence ‘she is a human organism’. For our purposes, it will help to render the sentence ‘we are human organisms’ in the third-person-singular present form as follows: ‘she is a human organism’. The ‘is’ in this sentence is, according to the animalist, the ‘is’ of numerical identity.<sup>22</sup> That is, when one utters the sentence ‘she is a human organism’, according to the animalist this is shorthand for ‘she is *numerically identical* to a human organism.’ Likewise, the sentence ‘we are human organisms’, according to animalists, is shorthand for the sentence ‘we are numerically identical to human organisms’.

One might think that this just is what the sentence ‘we are human organisms’ means. Although *prima facie* this is what the sentence means, those that hold to ‘the constitution view’ disagree. Someone that holds to the constitution view may also assert ‘she is a human organism’ but, when the constitutionalist utters the word ‘is’, by it she means the ‘is’ of constitution (cf. Olson 2015, 89). Sydney Shoemaker, for example, uses the word this way. He writes, ‘a person “is” an animal, not in the sense of being identical to one, but in the sense of sharing matter with one’ (Shoemaker

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<sup>20</sup> As Thornton (2016, 523) notes that Johansson (2007) seems to assume.

<sup>21</sup> After all, one may be an animalist and an anticriterialist. That is, one might think that there are no informative sufficient conditions for our identity across time but believe that we are essentially human organisms (see Merricks (2001).

<sup>22</sup> Olson (2015, 88–94) has some worries about describing animalism as, at least in part, the thesis that we are *numerically identical* to human organisms. He writes, ‘it may be no mistake to state animalism as the view that we are identical to animals, since that formulation is equivalent to the simpler one [i.e., we are animals]. But it encourages a number of thoughts that *are* mistaken: that the identity formulation is clearer than saying simply that we are animals, that it implies that we are animals in a stricter sense than we are people or parents, and it employs the “is” of identity’ (Olson 2015, 94). While I think Olson’s worries are well-founded I simply register them and move on. I use the identity formulation of animalism to distinguish animalism from a close cousin, namely the constitution view.

1984, 113). It should be noted I take the ‘is’ in the sentence ‘she is a human organism’ to be the ‘is’ of identity and not the ‘is’ of constitution. I am excluding the constitution view as a form of animalism.<sup>23</sup> I will return to the constitution view when I consider possible responses to the problem of life after death and not before.

### 1.3 ‘Human Organisms’

Third, consider the phrase ‘human organisms’. Elsewhere animalism has been stated as follows:

- ‘[a]nimalism may be stated with pleasing brevity: “we are animals”’ (Bailey 2015, 867);
- ‘the animalist asserts simply, ... we are animals’ (cf. Blatti 2014, sect. 1.1);
- ‘[e]ach of us is identical with, is one and the same things as, an animal’ (Snowdon 2014, 7);
- ‘one of the main questions about the metaphysics of human people is whether we are animals: biological organisms. Snowdon, van Inwagen and I say yes’ (Olson 2015, 84);
- ‘we are animals: biological organisms, members of the primate species *Homo sapiens*’ (Olson 2007, 23);
- ‘I believe that human persons are material objects (living human organisms)’ (van Inwagen 2007, 206).

Among these quotations one may notice a distinction: some animalists say that we are ‘animals’ while some say that we are ‘human organisms’. For the purpose of this thesis I will understand the phrases ‘human organism’ and ‘human animal’ to be synonymous. Indeed, as Stephen Blatti notes, ‘participants on both sides of the debate over animalism tend to treat these terms interchangeably’ (Blatti 2014, sect. 1.1). I will continue to do so. My preferred term however is ‘organism’ because the animalist philosopher with whom I am primarily engaging in this thesis, Peter van Inwagen, prefers to use the term ‘organism’ in his work.

That we are human organisms is supposed to conflict with the following views. That we are: souls, material bodies, body-soul composites, spatial or temporal proper parts

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<sup>23</sup> This is standard practice. As it turns out, however, I think that a version of the problem of life after death can be run against the constitution view too. I will return to this point later in my thesis.

of organisms, bundles of mental states or computer programs. It is by contrast to some of these other views (like the soul view, or the body-soul composite view) that animalism distinguishes itself as a *materialist* view. That is, human organisms, according to animalists, are composed entirely from matter. Andrew Bailey notes that in answer to the question ‘are human animals wholly material beings?’, ‘[m]ost contemporary animalists say “yes”’ (Bailey 2015, 868).

It is not obvious, however, that this needs to be the case. Aristotle, for example, may be an animalist; he thought that the sentence ‘we are human organisms’ is true. According to some, however, Aristotle did not think that human organisms were wholly material beings; they were to be understood as composites of matter and form. Other non-materialist animalists include Aquinas and Patrick Toner (2014).<sup>24</sup>

For all I know, it could be the case that we are human organisms that have an immaterial part. Or, if we are a being especially liberal, that we could be human organisms and that human organisms are souls.<sup>25</sup> For the purposes of this thesis I will accept that these two proposals are possible.<sup>26</sup> The target of my arguments in this thesis, however, is the materialist kind of animalism. In particular, the target of this thesis is the animalist who espouses Peter van Inwagen’s materialist version of animalism. I focus on the materialist version of animalism because the problem of life after death is not supposed to be an objection to ‘animalism’ in its broadest form but to the thesis that we are, as organisms, wholly material beings. Most contemporary

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<sup>24</sup> To be clear, van Inwagen has rejected hylomorphism. Van Inwagen writes, albeit referring to Thomas Aquinas’ hylomorphism specifically, ‘St Thomas Aquinas, as every schoolman knows, teaches that we are some sort of union or amalgam or compound, of a material and an immaterial substance; and such a union could not be classified as either material or immaterial. But the form the position takes seems scarcely coherent’ (van Inwagen 2007, 204). His argument for this claim follows this passage immediately.

<sup>25</sup> Alison Thornton sees no reason to rule out the possibility that we are human organisms that are souls. She writes, ‘[b]ut whether animalism rules out these putative opponents [e.g., the view that we are souls] seems to be underdetermined. That we are animals rules out that we are souls, for example, only if animals aren’t or can’t be souls, but maybe they are or can be’ (Thornton 2016, 516). Moreover, Josh Thurrow tells me (albeit in an unpublished manuscript) that it is a possibility that we are human organisms that have an immaterial part (and this view need not be hylomorphic, like the view described above). He writes, ‘it is broadly logically possible for an animal to be an object made of both material parts and an immaterial soul as a part’ (Thurrow, n.d.).

<sup>26</sup> These two views, interestingly, remove a rather popular argument for materialist animalism. The argument trades on the apparently very strong intuition that we are animals (see (Licon 2014)). If this argument is supposed to be an argument for a materialist position, then the above two positions undermine this argument.

animalists are materialist animalists.<sup>27</sup> There are versions of materialist animalism other than the version espoused by Peter van Inwagen. I will consider some of these versions of animalism when I come to consider death in a moment.<sup>28</sup>

When I use the term ‘materialism’ for the purposes of this thesis, I am referring to the view that we are composed entirely by a material substance. This view sometimes gets called ‘local materialism’ (van Inwagen 2007, 206). It stands in contrast to the view, sometimes called ‘global materialism’, that every concrete thing is material. Materialist animalists need not be committed to global materialism. Unless otherwise noted, the term ‘animalist’ will henceforth include in its extension both local and global materialist animalists; i.e., it will include any animalist that holds to the view that we are human organisms and human organisms are wholly material beings.

What precisely are human organisms? First, we are *human* organisms. That is, the things to which we refer with our first-person pronouns are organisms that belong to the species *Homo sapiens*. Second, organisms, the animalist believes, are ‘concrete particulars. They are substances, and not events or states or aspects of something else...they are made up entirely of matter: they have no immaterial or nonphysical parts’ (van Inwagen 2007, 206). This tells us something about what organisms are: substances made up entirely of matter. The following question, however, remains: what distinguishes an organism from other (supposed) substances made up entirely from matter, say, chairs, or computers? After all, chairs and computers are (apparently) concrete particulars, substances, and not events or states or aspects of something else, and they are made up entirely of matter.

In order to answer this question, I will now introduce Peter van Inwagen’s metaphysics of material constitution. Before I do, however, I should make one thing clear: one could run the problem of life after death against animalism without relying on every axiom of van Inwagen’s metaphysics of material constitution. I, however, will consider the problem of life after death for animalism in the light of van Inwagen’s metaphysics of material constitution. This is not merely because I am

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<sup>27</sup> Animalists such as Olson, for example, write, ‘organisms are made up entirely of matter: they have no immaterial or nonphysical parts’ (Olson 2007, 27). Moreover, van Inwagen writes, ‘I believe that human persons are material objects (living human organisms), and that they have no part or aspect that is in any way immaterial’ (van Inwagen 2007, 206).

<sup>28</sup> In particular, I am thinking of somaticist animalism.

primarily engaging with van Inwagen but also because I think that his metaphysics of constitution plays a powerful explanatory role when spelling out the intricacies of the problem of life after death. Whether or not one accepts the more controversial aspects of van Inwagen's metaphysics of material constitution will not matter for this thesis. The controversial aspects include one that is especially controversial: the view that the only material things that exist are organisms and material simples.

Van Inwagen's general metaphysical project as outlined in *Material Beings* (van Inwagen 1990) is to answer the special-composition question (SCQ). That is,

(SCQ) 'when is it true that  $\exists y$  the  $x$ s compose  $y$ ?' (van Inwagen 1990, 30).

Let the  $x$ s be material simples. Simples are objects that have no proper parts. Material simples are those material objects that have no proper parts. We (currently, at least) are, I would argue, committed to the existence of material simples such as fermions, quarks, leptons and gauge bosons. Material simples, however, need not be fermions, quarks, leptons and gauge bosons. Suppose that it were to turn out that we were wrong that these were the fundamental particles (i.e., particles that have no proper parts), but that these particles were in fact composed of other simples. The simples that compose fermions, quarks, leptons and gauge bosons could then be considered the 'material simples' (i.e., if they do indeed turn out to be material themselves and are not composed of any proper parts).<sup>29</sup> Let  $y$  be a composite object, that is, an object composed of parts.

Van Inwagen is unsatisfied with the extreme answers to the special-composition question: Nihilism (put simply, the view that there are no composite objects) and Universalism (put simply, the view that for any plurality of objects, those objects compose something) (van Inwagen 1990, 72-74). Van Inwagen proposes what he takes to be a moderate answer to this question.

Put simply, van Inwagen holds that there is one and only one way in which it can be true that  $\exists y$  the  $x$ s compose  $y$ . This is when

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<sup>29</sup> As mentioned in the preliminaries section this thesis assumes that matter is ultimately particulate.

(SCQ<sub>ANS</sub>) ‘the activity of the *x*s constitutes a life’ (van Inwagen 1990, 90).<sup>30</sup>

A life, according to van Inwagen, is a natural biochemical process or, I might add, a collection of natural biochemical processes<sup>31</sup> that material simples get ‘caught up’ in (van Inwagen 1990, 94). When these material simples get ‘caught up’ in a life they come to compose an organism. Van Inwagen thinks that it is the job of biology to supply us with the relevant definition of a life; he writes, ‘[i]n the last analysis, it is the business of biology to answer this question [i.e., what is life?]’ (van Inwagen 1990, 84). Van Inwagen, however, does not provide us with a biological definition of a life. This may be for a number of reasons. First, as Mark Bedau notes, ‘[t]he nature of life is notoriously controversial. The lack of consensus among the scientists and philosophers who are interested in the question is well known. The standard views about the nature of life are quite diverse, and most seem to have straightforward counter examples’ (Bedau 2014, 14). Second, van Inwagen admits, ‘it may be indeterminate whether the activity of certain objects constitutes a life’ (van Inwagen 1993b, 685). To supply van Inwagen with a complete biological description of life here would take me too far from the main aim of this thesis.<sup>32</sup> Instead, I point the interested reader to Bedau’s recent paper ‘The nature of life’ (Bedau 2014) to begin to determine what biological processes, precisely, are required for ‘life’.<sup>33</sup>

Van Inwagen does, however, provide us with an analogy. This analogy describes an event that is supposed to have features similar to those of a life. He then uses this analogy to give us a working definition of a life. Van Inwagen writes,

[i]magine a club the new members of which are always shanghaied. When a new member is wanted, a press-gang is sent to find a suitable candidate. When one is found, he is dragged to the club’s premises and forcibly inducted. The induction ceremony (we may imagine) is so impressive that members are fiercely loyal to the club as long as they remain members. But few if any members remain members long. When a member is exhausted by his efforts

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<sup>30</sup> Van Inwagen calls this the ‘Proposed Answer’ (van Inwagen 1993c, 710).

<sup>31</sup> Van Inwagen writes, ‘life is the sum of a great many chemical processes’ (van Inwagen 1990, 146).

<sup>32</sup> Indeed, an entire book on the topic would, so it seems, be insufficient.

<sup>33</sup> Moreover, Bedau provides an overview of a number of different approaches that one can take to defining life. I will return to the consideration of a biological definition of life when I consider the problem of life after death.

on the club's behalf, and after his resources have been appropriated and placed in the club's treasury, he is ruthlessly expelled. The membership of the club is its constitution (which, of course, is not an identifiable object but rather a complex set of dispositions and intensions that is maintained by the assiduous indoctrination of new members). One important feature of this constitution is its prescription that whenever anyone ceased to be a member, a press-gang is to be sent out to capture a replacement for him, someone who is as much like the way he was when he was inducted as possible. As a consequence, the club 'looks' much the same from one year to the next despite the continual replacement of its members. It is important to note that the relatively unchanging aspect of our club is due to what might be called 'internal causation,' to the causal relations its members bear to one another, and is not due to the actions of any external 'policing' or monitoring or maintenance agency (van Inwagen 1990, 84).

The club represents an organism. The club-candidates are simples that are not yet constituents of the life of the club. Club-candidates that are inducted get 'caught up' in the 'life' of the club, just as simples get caught up in the life of an organism. Just as club-members do not last long before they are expelled, so the material simples that get caught up in a life get expelled through excreta.

To this analogy van Inwagen says that he will 'add a few notes' (van Inwagen 1990, 87). I take these 'few notes' to be three (non-biological) conditions for some  $z$ 's being a life. I, following van Inwagen, define 'life' as follows:

**Life** =  $z$  is a life *iff*  $z$  is an event that is (i) well-individuated (ii) self-maintaining and (iii) jealous (van Inwagen 1990, 87–89).

'Event,' 'well-individuated,' 'self-maintaining' and 'jealous' as used by van Inwagen are all technical terms. I shall say a little about each here. First, I shall consider events. Van Inwagen refrains from offering an ontology of events<sup>34</sup> but he does say

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<sup>34</sup> Eric Olson has brought it to my attention that van Inwagen has stated that he thinks that events do not exist. Van Inwagen writes, '[m]y extreme ideas about ontology also imply either the falsity or the

that lives are, of course, events that are individuals or particulars and not ‘events’ in the sense ‘that can recur’ (van Inwagen 1990, 82). It should also be said that van Inwagen understands a life to be a particular type of event, a process, since he refers to the event type—life—as a natural ‘process’ (van Inwagen 1990, 146) (or, indeed, sum of natural biochemical processes). Van Inwagen also says of lives that they are *homeodynamic* events. By this van Inwagen means that particular lives can undergo change of a certain sort yet remain the same throughout this change. In particular, the simples that are, for example, caught up in my life were once not caught up in my life but came to be by my, say, digesting some food of which the simples that compose me now were (virtually) a part. Moreover, these simples will, at some point, over a period of time, all cease to be caught up in my life. Some of them will cease to be caught up in my life by virtue of my defecating, giving blood or having an organ removed etc. Throughout all of these changes, however, my life will continue. The life that the simples became caught up in when I digested the food was the same life that certain simples were caught up in before I digested the food and when I gave blood three months later.

‘Well-individuated’, put simply, means that it is ‘reasonably clear...whether a life [that] is observed at one time...is the same life as a life that is observed at another time (or place)’ (van Inwagen 1990, 87). It is reasonably clear, I take it, to a biologist studying a particular plant, that the biological processes going on ‘within’ the plant at one time are the same biological processes that are going on within a plant at another time.<sup>35</sup> ‘Self-maintaining,’ says that lives need no external support for their

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mere vacuous truth of the so-called identity thesis—the thesis that every mental event is a physical event. They have this implication because they imply that there are no events, no events of any description, either mental or physical’ (van Inwagen 2014a, 245). One may think that this is problematic for the following reason. If human organisms exist in virtue of the fact that the simples that compose them are constituents of events (lives) but events do not exist, then lives do not exist. This, on first appearances, implies that organisms do not exist for organisms exist if and only if the simples that compose them are constituents of a life. I do not know what to make of this point. I hope that van Inwagen can clear this up at some point. I will return to this point in Chapter 5.

<sup>35</sup> There may be some occasions when it is not clear whether an organism has produced a descendent or is continuing to live itself. In these cases it may be argued that it is not clear whether a life that is observed at one time is the same life as the life that is observed at another. Examples where it is not clear are cases like the amoeba and the immortal jellyfish. (I thank Daniel Hill for drawing these examples to my attention.) Van Inwagen considers amoebas in (1990, 150–151). I take it that cases like these are the reason that van Inwagen uses the adverb ‘reasonably.’

existence.<sup>36</sup> A shoot of water from a fountain, for example, is not a self-maintaining event. It needs a pump to keep it going, whereas a life needs only the biological processes that are inherent to it for it to persist. These processes are, I take it, those processes that biologists refer to as *metabolic processes* (or, at least, metabolic-like processes).<sup>37</sup> As Bedau notes, metabolic processes are those processes that are features of ‘self-maintaining...chemical system[s]’ (Bedau 2014, 14). ‘Jealous,’ put simply, says that ‘it cannot be that the activities of the *x*s constitute at one and the same time two lives’ (van Inwagen 1990, 89). No matter how close to another organism I get it will never be the case that the *x*s that compose me will, at the same time, compose another organism.

This answer to the special-composition question (i.e.,  $\exists y$  iff there are some *x*s the activity of which constitute a life) means that there are no material objects that are not organisms or material simples. Van Inwagen writes, ‘my position vis-a-vis tables and other inanimate objects is simply that there are none’ (van Inwagen 1990, 99). This is because, on van Inwagen’s metaphysics of material constitution, the only objects that exist are material simples and objects that are composed of material simples. The only objects that exist, therefore, besides material simples, are organisms. The material simples that seemingly compose chairs, tables, and computers, therefore, do not actually compose these (supposed) things since these simples are not caught up in (i.e., constituents of) a well-individuated, self-maintaining and jealous event. We might say, with van Inwagen, that the simples that seemingly compose such seeming objects only ‘virtually’ (van Inwagen 1990, 133) compose them.

It must be noted at this point, however, that van Inwagen holds that uttering, say, ‘there are two very valuable chairs in the next room’ is not false. Even though he thinks that chairs do not exist he holds that there is a way of paraphrasing statements (such as the one mentioned in the previous sentence). For example, ‘there are two chairs’ might simply be paraphrased ‘there are simples arranged chair-wise in two

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<sup>36</sup> Besides, perhaps, God’s on-going external support, oxygen in the organism’s environment, a stable atmosphere, and a regular supply of food and water. These may be serious exceptions (serious for van Inwagen’s project). I leave it to my reader to decide. For the sake of argument, I will assume that they are not serious exceptions.

<sup>37</sup> Strictly speaking metabolic processes are internal to cells. When biologists speak of the metabolic processes of organisms I take it that they speaking analogously.

different spatial locations'. Van Inwagen claims that what we really mean by 'there exist two chairs' is 'there exist simples arranged chair-wise in two different spatial locations'. Thus, we are not saying anything false provided we accept van Inwagen's rules for paraphrase. He likens this to the utterance, 'The sun has moved behind the elms'. Ordinarily, we do not take this utterance to be false, while we recognize that the sun does not, in fact, move behind the elms.

What is important for the purpose of this thesis, however, is not that there may be no tables, chairs or computers etc. Rather, what matters for our purposes is that organisms are objects composed entirely of material simples and they are composed of material simples in virtue of the fact that these simples come to be constituents of lives.<sup>38</sup> Perhaps one can salvage the existence of tables and chairs while at the same time believing that organisms exist in virtue of the fact that the simples that compose them are constituents of a life, perhaps not. What is important is that lives themselves are necessary for the existence of organisms.

In sum, according to animalists we are human organisms. Human organisms are composite objects that are composed entirely of material simples. The simples that compose a particular organism compose it by virtue of the fact that those simples are constituents of a life.

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<sup>38</sup> To be clear, for the rest of this thesis I will follow van Inwagen by saying that simples are constituents of lives and compose human organisms. Simples do not constitute organisms or compose lives.

## CHAPTER 2 – PERSONAL IDENTITY

So far I have primarily commented on what animalists think we are, and have tried to avoid stating how animalists think that we persist across time. In this thesis, however, since I am interested in our persistence across death and since animalists think that we are human organisms, we will need to know what the persistence conditions of human organisms are.

Specifying what the animalist thinks our persistence conditions are is not straightforward. Animalism has come to be identified with the central animalist assertion (AA). This position (so it is argued) is neutral with regard to how we, human organisms, persist from one time to the next.<sup>39</sup> I will start, however, by identifying the animalist account of our persistence conditions that is favoured by the type of animalism that is central to this thesis: that type of animalism held by, for example, van Inwagen and Olson. This type of animalism does hold that our persistence conditions are determined by the kind of thing that we are. We are human organisms and in consequence, have the persistence conditions of human organisms. Human organisms exist in virtue of the fact that the simples that compose them are constituents of lives. It is natural to think, therefore, that the persistence of human organisms will be determined by, or at least dependent upon, the persistence conditions of lives.

Peter van Inwagen puts forward a criterion for the persistence of human organisms. Van Inwagen calls this the criterion for the persistence of human organisms '*Life*'<sup>40</sup>. It can be stated as follows:

*Life* = 'if the activity of the *xs* at  $t_1$  constitutes a life, and the activity of the *ys* at  $t_2$  constitutes a life, then the organism that the *xs* compose at  $t_1$  is the organism that the *ys* compose at  $t_2$  if and only if the life constituted by the activity of the *xs* at  $t_1$  is the life constituted by the activity of the *ys* at  $t_2$ ' (van Inwagen 1990, 145).

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<sup>39</sup> See Bailey (2015) and Thornton (2016).

<sup>40</sup> Van Inwagen uses the term 'life' in two ways. First, 'life' (non-italicised) denotes an event, as defined above. Second, '*Life*' (italicised) denotes his criterion for the persistence of an organism. I will follow van Inwagen.

Put simply, an organism persists when and only when its life persists. This is a version of the view known as the ‘Biological Approach’ to personal identity. It is called this because if an organism persists when and only when its life persists and it is the job of biology to supply us with the correct definition of life then our persistence conditions will be biological in nature. It is also called the ‘Biological Approach’ to differentiate it from psychological approaches. Psychological approaches say that  $x$  is identical with some future or past being  $y$  if and only if  $x$  and  $y$  have the same relevant mental properties. Which mental properties are relevant depends upon the kind of psychological approach one takes. For example, one may think that necessarily, for some person,  $y$ , at a time  $t_2$ , to be the same as some person,  $x$ , at an earlier time  $t_1$ ,  $y$  needs to remember some experience had by  $x$ .

The Biological Approach, however, is not the only animalist account for the persistence conditions of human organisms. Let us distinguish between the ‘personal ontology question’ and the ‘persistence question’. An animalist may answer the personal-ontology question *what are we?* ‘human organisms’, but the persistence question *do we have biological persistence conditions?*<sup>41</sup> ‘no.’ There are two reasons for this negative answer. First, the animalist may be an anticriterialist. That is, she may believe that there are no informative sufficient<sup>42</sup> conditions for our persistence across time. Second, the animalist may believe that the human organism can persist even when its life processes cease. I will return to these negative answers to the persistence questions later. (I will discuss the view that we persist when our life processes have ceased in Chapter 3 and the view that there are no informative sufficient conditions for our persistence across time in Chapter 7.

Let us, therefore, return to *Life*. One may think that while *Life* is a necessary and sufficient condition for the persistence of *organisms* in general, it is not a sufficient condition for the persistence of human *persons* in particular. One reason for thinking this is the fact that many of us have the intuition that ‘in Daniel Dennett’s words, where my brain goes, go I’ (van Inwagen 1990, 169).

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<sup>41</sup> See Bailey (2015, 868).

<sup>42</sup> See (Duncan 2014; Merricks 2001).

Consider, for example, the following brain-transplant scenario. Let us say that you undergo a terrible accident that leaves you paralyzed; you cannot engage in the normal use of your motor skills. You cannot ride a bike. You cannot do a push-up. You cannot pick up your pen. You are, subsequently, taken to hospital. You stay in hospital for a very long time; ten years, let us say. Your body<sup>43</sup> begins to show signs of significant aging. So much so that even if you could be helped, even if you were to regain some of your motor skills, your body would be in such a bad way that you would never be very active ever again. Let us also say that in the bed next to you there is a patient who has long been in a vegetative state. Let us call him 'Smith'. Let us also say that Smith has said that were he to be in a vegetative state for long enough he would donate his body to a worthy cause. He has been in this vegetative state for a sufficient length of time for his body to be donated to any worthy cause. A very talented brain surgeon, upon viewing you and Smith side-by-side, sees an obvious solution to your problem. With your approval he decides to transfer your brain to the body of Smith and Smith's brain to your body. The question is: in this case, where do you go? Most of us, I hazard, have the intuition that we go with our brains. That is, when the surgeon removes your brain from your body you are being removed from your body. When the surgeon places your brain in Smith's body you come to be composed of your brain and all of the parts that recently composed Smith.

According to animalism you go where your life-processes go. On the face of it, however, in the above scenario your life-processes stay behind with your body. Even though the surgeon switches your brain with Smith's brain it seems that, according to animalism, we should say that Smith would wake up from the surgery with your memories, your beliefs, your desires and would think himself married to your wife etc. but Smith would not be you. This is a rather counter-intuitive result of animalism. Most of us share the brain-transplant intuition. According to animalism, however, a

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<sup>43</sup> When I use the term 'body' I mean to refer to a certain set of simples caught up in a life. Or, if you prefer, 'your body' may be read as 'the animal with which you are identical'. I say this because I know that animalists often say that they think the word 'body' is problematic (see, for example, van Inwagen (1980)). I keep the word 'body' in my thesis, however, for expunging it completely would be excruciating for both the reader and myself. Moreover, non-animalists frequently use the word 'body' when engaging in the debate that this thesis concerns.

brain transplant simply moves one organ from one organism to another, like a liver or kidney transplant.

One may think that this provides us with a reason to reject the claim that *Life* is a necessary and sufficient condition for our persistence, for the thought experiment suggests that this persistence requires the persistence of psychological properties. Van Inwagen does not think this. Despite Dennett's objections to the slogan 'where my brain goes, go I', van Inwagen believes that one does, in fact, go with one's brain. Not only this but van Inwagen thinks that this belief can be shown to be 'a natural consequence of the principles governing the unity and persistence of organisms' (van Inwagen 1990, 169). Van Inwagen thinks that one goes with one's brain and that this is consistent with his materialist metaphysics and *Life*.

As Paul Anders notes (2011), there are several stages to van Inwagen's argument for the claim that one goes with one's brain. First, van Inwagen argues that it is correct to say 'I exist', and he bases this claim on the Cartesian argument for one's existence without making any commitment to the existence of immaterial beings (cf. van Inwagen 1990, 116). Second, van Inwagen argues that it is correct to say that I exist as a composite object. He defends this claim by arguing that, as Anders notes, 'thinking requires a unified and organized interaction of parts that the mere coming together of material simples cannot produce' (Anders 2011, 30). Consequently, he concludes that if I am a material object then I am a composite object. Third, van Inwagen argues that it is the simples that compose one's brain (a virtual object) that are, in part, the simples that compose one. He is able to argue for this claim because, as Anders highlights, the brain is, according to van Inwagen, 'the seat of the information that directs the homeodynamic event that is the life of the entire human organism' (Anders 2011, 30). Van Inwagen calls the seat of the information that directs the homeodynamic event that is the life of the entire human organism the 'organ of maintenance' (van Inwagen 1990, 208), it is the organ that maintains all of the relevant life processes. The organ of maintenance in human organisms is the brain (or, rather, some particular part of the brain).<sup>44</sup> It is in virtue of this fact that van Inwagen thinks that it is appropriate to say that one goes with one's brain.

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<sup>44</sup> See Shewmon (2001) and Olson (2016) for recent challenges.

Van Inwagen provides us with an analogy to demonstrate this point. Imagine an empire, which ‘is governed almost entirely from the Imperial Palace’ (van Inwagen 1990, 175). Intelligence flows into the palace from the empire and information and instructions flow out of the palace to the empire. Van Inwagen then gets us to ‘imagine that some catastrophe isolates the palace. No instructions can leave it’ (van Inwagen 1990, 174). When this happens, according to van Inwagen, ‘the empire...shrank to compose the isolated palace staff’ (van Inwagen 1990, 174).<sup>45</sup>

Having laid out his analogy, van Inwagen writes:

[t]he fact that there was no preexistent political entity distinct from the empire that the empire became corresponds to the fact that, when one’s brain and brain-complement [the pile of simples that remain once one’s brain has been removed] are separated and one shrinks to a three-pound object, there is no pre-existent material object, initially distinct from one’s self, that one becomes (van Inwagen 1990, 174).

In other words, when your brain is removed you do not then become identical with your brain where once you were identical with a human organism. Rather, certain simples that once composed you have ceased to compose you and you have been pared down to the size of your brain, just as when the Imperial Palace gets cut off from the rest of the empire, the empire is reduced to the size of the Imperial Palace. So, when your brain gets removed you are reduced to the size of your brain. (I should make it clear that this is supposing the brain is, somehow, still functioning. Perhaps it is gradually hooked up to an elaborate ‘life-support machine’ (cf. van Inwagen 1990, 177) as it is removed). It must further be added, however, that a surgically removed brain, or relevant part of that brain, that is not able to function as a living organism has ceased to exist and, therefore, cannot compose a particular organism. Consequently, the simples that compose the brain need to constitute a life for a particular organism to exist and for personal identity to be maintained.

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<sup>45</sup> That the empire shrinks to compose the isolated palace is not obvious to all. For example, it seems that the members of the British Antarctic Survey still belong to that organisation when they are isolated in the South Pole. (Thanks to Daniel Hill for this example.) For the sake of argument, however, I will assume that van Inwagen is right.

Given that human organisms can go where their brains go, Anders offers the following principle, the principle of personal identity with regard to human organisms, or  $PPI_{HO}$ .

$PPI_{HO}$  The person that the  $zs$  compose at  $t_1$  is the person that the  $zs^*$  compose at  $t_2$  iff:

- (1) the activity of the  $xs$  that virtually compose a brain, or the relevant portion thereof, at  $t_1$  are a subset [sic] of the  $zs$  whose activity constitutes a life at  $t_1$ ;
- (2) the activity of the  $ys$  that virtually compose a brain, or the relevant portion thereof, at  $t_2$  are a subset of the  $zs^*$  whose activity constitutes a life at  $t_2$ ;
- (3) the life constituted by the activity of the  $zs$  at  $t_1$  is the life constituted by the activity of the  $zs^*$  at  $t_2$  (Anders 2011, 30).

Put simply, Anders concludes that the sufficient condition for personal identity of human organisms across time is as follows: ‘a human person exists as long as there persists a human life-event that arises from the ongoing interaction of simples a portion of which continually<sup>46</sup> compose a human brain’ (Anders 2011, 31). This is consistent with *Life* but includes the relevant consideration of the place of the brain, or portion thereof, which directs a human life. We should not think that it must be the whole brain since the whole brain is not needed to direct a homeodynamic event, a life. In fact, animalists (of the variety with which I am concerned) have taken the organ of maintenance in human organisms to be, specifically, the brainstem (in particular, see Olson (2016) and Tzinman (2016)).

While  $PPI_{HO}$  is a helpful clarification and will be important later in this thesis, at the moment *Life* will be sufficient. When relevant, however, I will employ the more specific  $PPI_{HO}$ .

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<sup>46</sup>Note that Anders includes ‘continually’ though this word does not appear in  $PPI_{HO}$ .

## CHAPTER 3 – DEATH AND LIFE AFTER DEATH

### 3.1 Death

Third, and finally, because we are interested in the persistence of human organisms through death we need to know what the animalist counts as death for human organisms. For the time being let us assume that death simply is the cessation of life. Cody Gilmore calls this ‘the cessation thesis’. He writes,

‘when does a thing die?’ One natural answer to this question is, ‘when it stops being alive.’ ...I dub [this answer] the Cessation Thesis (CT):

CT Necessarily, for any  $x$  and any  $t$ , if  $t$  is an instant, then  $x$  dies at  $t$  if and only if  $x$  ceases to be alive at  $t$ ’ (cf. Gilmore 2013, 5).<sup>47</sup>

On the assumption that CT is true we may understand van Inwagen to have given two ways by which an organism can die, two ways by which an organism can cease to be alive. I call these two ways ‘modes’ of death.<sup>48</sup> First, he gives the mode of death that he calls ‘disruption’. This can be put as follows, using the abbreviation “MD” to indicate a mode of death:

**(MD1) Disruption** =  $O$ ’s life has been disrupted at  $t$  if the simples that composed  $O$  have been dissociated from one another.

For example, van Inwagen writes that this dissociation has occurred when the organism ‘has been blown to bits by a bomb or...died naturally and has been subject to the normal “room-temperature” processes of biological decay for, say, fifteen minutes’ (van Inwagen 1990, 147). The important point is that when an organism gets blown to bits by a bomb, or has died naturally and has been subject to normal processes of biological decay for around fifteen minutes, the  $x$ s that composed that organism before it was subject to normal processes of biological decay cease to be constituents of a life. This is a rather unambiguous mode of death. Suppose I am

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<sup>47</sup> Since we are interested in organisms, specifically, one should read CT as: necessarily, for any organism,  $O$ , and any time,  $t$ , if  $t$  is an instant, then  $O$  dies at  $t$  if and only if  $O$  ceases to be alive at  $t$ .

<sup>48</sup> It should be noted that van Inwagen never discusses death in his book *Material Beings*: i.e., he never discusses when human organisms die and what this might amount to. Rather, he merely discusses ‘the cessation of life’. I assume for the moment that death is the cessation of life, however, as will become apparent, van Inwagen will need an account of death like CT in order for his defence of the possibility of resurrection to be considered plausible.

blown to bits by a bomb. Once I have been blown up, there are no relations that are characteristic of the relations between simples that are constituents of a life among any of the simples that used to compose me; likewise if my remains are subject to the normal processes of biological decay.

Before I introduce van Inwagen's second mode of death I must first raise a major problem for CT. One might argue that CT is false because there are cases (real and imaginary) where the life of an organism has ceased but it is not dead. This occurs, so it is argued, when an organism undergoes *cryptobiosis*. As Gilmore notes, 'the term "cryptobiosis" was introduced by the entomologist and biochemist David Keilin' (Gilmore 2013, 15). Cryptobiosis is 'the state of an organism when it shows no visible signs of life and when its metabolic activity becomes hardly measureable, or comes reversibly to a standstill' (Keilin 1959, 166). There are many forms of cryptobiosis: *cryobiosis*, *anhydrobiosis*, *anoxybiosis*, *chembiosis* and *osmobiosis*. This thesis is primarily concerned with cryobiosis.<sup>49</sup> Keilin describes a clear case of cryobiosis. Keilin recounts that Paul Becquerel cooled desiccated, anhydrobiotic tardigrades to 0.008 and 0.0047 degrees above absolute zero. When the tardigrades reached these temperatures, their metabolic activity was hardly measureable. These tardigrades were then successfully revived after two hours (Keilin 1959, 178–179; Gilmore 2013, 15). Van Inwagen provides his own, albeit imaginary, example of (what I take to be) cryobiosis; namely, cryogenic freezing. Van Inwagen asks us to imagine that we take a cat and 'we reduce its body temperature to very nearly absolute zero by some technique (not currently available, by the way) that does no irreversible organic damage' (van Inwagen 1990, 147) and later revive it.

In both cases, it seems that most of us believe that the tardigrades and the frozen cat that have been warmed up and thawed are identical to the tardigrades and the cat that were cooled to very nearly absolute zero. Van Inwagen writes, 'suppose that we then revive the cat...[i]t seems clear that the revived cat is the cat we started with' (van Inwagen 1990, 146). Indeed, as van Inwagen writes, '[t]he phrase "the revived cat"

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<sup>49</sup> Van Inwagen's suggestion that when we die 'God preserves our corpses contrary to all appearances' (van Inwagen 1998b, 49) has been read as follows: when we die 'God cryogenically freezes our corpses contrary to all appearances'. See, for example, (Hasker 1999, 223). But perhaps God uses cryobiosis, anhydrobiosis, anoxybiosis, chembiosis, osmobiosis or some as-of-yet-undiscovered preservation process. Little hangs on this point. What is important is not the method that God uses *per se* but whether the method that he uses suffices as a form of death.

strongly suggests, if it does not entail, that there is only one cat in our story' (van Inwagen 1990, 146). Likewise, Gilmore says that the cooled desiccated tardigrades were revived. I take it that Gilmore thinks that these tardigrades are the very same tardigrades as the tardigrades that had been previously cooled.

The question remains, however, what is the, we might say, 'vital status' of the tardigrade and the imaginary cat that have been cryogenically frozen? Are they dead or alive? The answers to these questions are important. This is primarily because whether or not CT is true depends on the vital status of the organism that has undergone cryptobiosis. If the organism that has been cryogenically frozen is dead in virtue of the fact that its life processes have ceased, then CT is true. If the organism is alive then CT is false; it is alive even though its life-processes have (apparently) ceased.<sup>50</sup>

There are, however, three possible options here; not two. First (i), in cases like the two mentioned above, it could be argued that the organism undergoing cryptobiosis is alive and not dead. Second, (ii) it could be argued that the organism undergoing cryptobiosis is dead and not alive. Third, (iii) it may be argued that the organism undergoing cryptobiosis is neither dead nor alive. In this case 'dead' and 'alive' are contraries, not contradictories. Something cannot be both death and alive but something can be neither dead nor alive. For example, as Gilmore points out, '[m]y wallet is not alive, but it's also not dead' (Gilmore 2013, 17). Or, if you do not believe in wallets, a material simple is not alive but it is also not dead.

There are adherents to each of these views. First, one may argue that the organism is dead (ii). Take the tardigrade, for example. One reason for arguing that the cryogenically preserved tardigrade is dead is that, as Keilin notes, the tardigrade's metabolism and other life-processes 'have stopped' (Gilmore 2013, 15). They have stopped because, according to James Clegg, the 'removal of all but, say, 0.1 g H<sub>2</sub>O/g dry weight (easily achieved by anhydrobionts), will inevitably result in the cessation

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<sup>50</sup> Moreover, the vital status will help us determine whether or not we are correct in identifying an organism that has been warmed up after it has been cryogenically frozen with the organism that occupied the exact same region of space moments before it was cryogenically frozen. For if, say, the cat's life-processes have ceased and (as will become apparent) lives that have ceased can never begin again, then the cat that has undergone cryptobiosis can never exist again; the cat after thawing is not the same cat as the cat that was cryogenically preserved (relatedly, whether or not we should say that the organism that has undergone cryopreservation exists). I will say more about this as I go.

of metabolism' (Clegg 2001, 615). If one holds that metabolic processes are necessary for life and that an organism that has undergone cryptobiosis displays none of these metabolic processes, then one can argue that the organism that has undergone cryptobiosis is dead. On this view, CT is true. The processes that are apparently necessary for life have ceased and the organism is considered dead. Many argue, however, that this is implausible (including, although for different reasons, (Luper 2009, 44; Gilmore 2013, 16)).

On the other hand, some argue (or, at least, would prefer to say) that the organism that has undergone cryptobiosis is alive (ii). One reason for thinking that an organism that has undergone cryptobiosis is alive is that, although its metabolic processes have ceased, they can still, relatively easily, return. The intuition here is that in order for something to be classed as 'dead' it has to not merely have its life-processes cease but it has to lose the capacity to live. Underlying this reasoning is the belief that something like the incapacity thesis (IT) is true. It can be stated as follows:

**(IT) Incapacity thesis** = Necessarily, for any  $x$  and for any  $t$ , if  $t$  is an instant, then  $x$  dies at  $t$  if and only if 'at  $t$ ,  $x$  loses the capacity to live' (Persson 1995, 501).<sup>51</sup>

IT is inconsistent with CT. If IT is true it is not the case that necessarily, for any  $x$  and any  $t$ , if  $t$  is an instant, then  $x$  dies at  $t$  if and only if  $x$  ceases to be alive at  $t$ , for it also needs to lose the capacity to live. The ramifications for this thesis is that if the organism that has undergone cryogenic freezing is alive then CT is false.

Third, (iii) one may want to argue that the organism that has undergone cryptobiosis is neither dead nor alive. Cody Gilmore takes this view. Gilmore argues that the organism that has undergone cryptobiosis is not alive because its life-functions have ceased.<sup>52</sup> Gilmore writes, 'a thing is alive at a time just in case it's performing "the right sorts of life-functions" at a time. *Whatever* those life-functions may be, it seems unlikely that they are being performed by a frozen or thoroughly desiccated cell or multicellular organism' (Gilmore 2013, 16). But, according to Gilmore neither is the

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<sup>51</sup> Gilmore (2013) discusses this thesis in great depth. I should add that Gilmore thinks that IT is only a necessary condition for his incomplete definition of death (see (Gilmore 2013, 39–40)).

<sup>52</sup> I take life-functions to be related to life-processes in the way that, say, the function of my digestive system is related to the processes of absorption and assimilation. For my digestive system to function it requires the digestive processes to be occurring.

organism that is undergoing cryptobiosis dead. It is not dead because, as Gilmore notes, ‘it is structurally intact and undamaged in a way that makes it relatively easy for it to be alive in the future’ (Gilmore 2013,17). On this view it is argued that CT is false too. The life of the cryogenically preserved organism has ceased but it is not dead because it retains the capacity to live.

At the moment, I will remain neutral with regard to which of the above (i)–(iii) is true (I will return to this point at sect. 6.1.1). What matters at the moment is stating what van Inwagen thinks the vital status of an organism that has undergone cryptobiosis is. Van Inwagen’s preferred view, although he says that ‘it is not really essential to [his] position’ (van Inwagen 1990, 147), is to say that the cat is alive. In one way, this is the most common-sense understanding of what occurs when an organism undergoes cryptobiosis; the cat that has undergone cryptobiosis has, literally, had its life (biosis) merely hidden (crypto) i.e., it has not ceased.

Importantly, however, according to van Inwagen it is alive, but this is not because the cat retains the capacity for life (as on IT). Rather, van Inwagen thinks that there are some processes going on within the frozen cat that are sufficient for life: sufficient for saying that the cat is *alive*. Van Inwagen describes what happens to the life of the cat as follows: the cat’s life, which (before it was frozen) ‘consisted mostly of chemical reactions and various relatively large-scale physical processes (the breaking and establishing of chemical bonds, the movement of fluids under hydraulic pressure, the transport of ions)’ (van Inwagen 1990, 147), upon freezing gets “‘squeezed into” various small-scale physical processes (the orbiting of electrons and the exchange of photons by charged particles). Its life became the sum of those subchemical changes that underlie and constitute chemical and large-scale physical unchange’ (van Inwagen 1990, 147).

We can call this ‘squeezing’; the cat has had its life-processes squeezed into submicroscopic processes. He writes that although the life of the cat ‘has ceased’ (van Inwagen 1990, 147), there is a sense in which the life is still ‘*there*’ (van Inwagen 1990, 147). In fact, van Inwagen writes of the frozen cat ‘I, who am fond of oxymorons, would describe the frozen cat as a *living corpse*’ (van Inwagen 1990, 147). As mentioned van Inwagen would prefer to say that the organism that has undergone cryptobiosis is alive. The life is still *there*; but it is not there in virtue of the

fact that there is some biochemical process (or collection of processes) occurring, nor is it there merely in virtue of the fact that the corpse retains a sufficient degree of life-apt structure, rather it is there in virtue of the fact that there are some subchemical processes occurring that suffice for life.

Having said this, van Inwagen admits that if someone says that the cat is not alive ‘I do not think that he is misusing the word “alive” I would say that he is assuming a stipulative sharpening of the meaning of “alive”’ (van Inwagen 1990, 147). In consequence, van Inwagen allows it to be the case that the organism that has undergone cryobiosis is either dead or neither dead nor alive.

I think that van Inwagen should accept his interlocutor’s stipulative sharpening. In fact, I think he should say not only that the cat is not alive but that the cat is dead. My reason for saying this is that if we want to maximise the number of possibilities for an organism’s being ‘dead’ and coming back to life i.e., maximise the number of possible explanations that van Inwagen can appeal to for saying that organism *O* has survived its death, then we should say that an organism that has undergone cryptobiosis is dead. By way of a brief explanation here, van Inwagen, correctly in my view, believes that ‘all men who share in the sin of Adam must die’ (van Inwagen 1998b, 49) and will later exist again on the Last Day. Put simply, van Inwagen believes that we (human organisms) all die but that we can come back to life. If he holds that an organism that has undergone cryptobiosis is dead, then it can come back to life. If, on the other hand, he holds that this organism is alive then it cannot come back to life again (for it has not died). Likewise, if he holds that an organism that has undergone cryptobiosis is neither dead nor alive then it can come back to life for, although it never died, it ceased to be alive.

Van Inwagen says that if we should take his interlocutor’s stipulative sharpening, we should not say that the cat is alive but say that the cat’s life has been *suspended*. If, as van Inwagen argues, the life of an organism that has been suspended has ceased and if we hold that CT is true (as I have argued van Inwagen should), then suspension is a mode of death.

We can define suspension as follows:

**(MD2) Suspension** =  $O$ 's life has been suspended at  $t$  if the life,  $L$ , in virtue of which the simples that composed  $O$  has ceased and the simples that were caught up in  $L$  retain—owing to the mere absence of disruptive forces—their individual properties and their relations to one another.

How different is this suggestion (that a life has been suspended) from the suggestion that the life has not been suspended but merely squeezed? I think it is merely terminological. That is, there is no difference between an organism that has had its life suspended and an organism that has had its life 'squeezed'. More precisely, the individual properties of, and relations between, the simples that compose an organism that has had its life squeezed are identical with the individual properties of, and relations between, the simples that compose an organism that has had its life suspended. Rather, some may prefer to say that a life that has been 'squeezed' is still there (and, in consequence, the organism is still alive) while others may prefer to say that since the life processes have been 'suspended' the life has ceased (and, in consequence, the organism is no longer alive). Both I think are permitted by van Inwagen.

However, if one wants to say that the organism that has had its life suspended still exists, something else needs to be said about the nature of an organism that has had its life suspended. This is because if an organism has had its life suspended and the simples that compose an organism need to be constituents of a life in order for that organism to exist (as is implied by van Inwagen's answer to the special-composition question), then, *prima facie*, an organism whose life has been suspended does not exist. Van Inwagen would prefer to say that the organism whose life has been suspended still exists. One reason for this may be that one would rather not say that an organism that has had its life suspended and then restarted has ceased to exist and then exists again. That is, most of us find it intuitive to say of an organism that has had its life suspended that it still exists.

To clarify, I will distinguish between two types of life: macroscopic-life and submicroscopic-life. An organism that is composed of simples the activity of which are constituents of macroscopic-life is 'alive' and an organism that is composed of

simples the activity of which are constituents of submicroscopic-life is ‘not alive.’<sup>53</sup> These two kinds of life can be distinguished by the processes involved. Processes that are essential to macroscopic-life are those processes like the breaking and establishing of chemical bonds, the movement of fluids under hydraulic pressure, and the transport of ions. Processes that are essential to submicroscopic-life include ‘the orbiting of electrons and the exchange of photons by charged particles.

When we say that an organism’s life has been suspended what we mean is that its macroscopic-life processes have ceased, but its submicroscopic-life processes continue. In this case when an organism has had its life suspended we can still say that the organism exists; the simples that compose it are still constituents of a life, just a submicroscopic-life. Moreover, if van Inwagen allows it to be the case that a necessary condition for some object’s being ‘alive’ is that the simples that compose it constitute a macroscopic-life and a sufficient condition for some object’s being dead<sup>54</sup> is that the simples that compose it constitute a submicroscopic-life, then squeezing can count as death.<sup>55</sup>

There is, in fact, no difference (ontologically speaking) between a corpse whose life has been squeezed but is still *there* (i.e., the organism becomes a living corpse) and a corpse whose life has been suspended. In practice, what this means is that I will use interchangeably van Inwagen’s description of what happens to a cat when it is frozen and has its life ‘squeezed’ and what happens to a cat whose life has been suspended.

Before I move on I should say a bit more about suspension. It must be noted that the fact that the simples retain individual properties and relations to one another (a necessary condition for suspension) is not a sufficient condition for the continuation of any submicroscopic process sufficient for life. After all, the simples that virtually compose a corpse that has had its life disrupted (perhaps a corpse that has been

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<sup>53</sup> This may strike my reader as problematic. That is, to say that some things can ‘have a life’ (albeit a submicroscopic one) and yet not be ‘alive.’ I think that this is problematic too. But the problem is van Inwagen’s and not mine. Existence requires a ‘life’ processes and if (as it appears) there are corpses that exist but they are not alive, then van Inwagen is committed to the view that some things can have a life and yet not be alive. In this passage, I am merely trying to make this notion as clear as possible.

<sup>54</sup> One may object here, that this is not a case of death. The organism should be classified as ‘alive’. This objection is an important one and will be considered later in this thesis. For the time being, however, I set it to one side.

<sup>55</sup> If one wants to be particularly pedantic one can adapt CT by putting forward the ‘macroscopic-life cessation thesis’. It can be stated as follows. Macroscopic-life cessation thesis = ‘an organism *O* has died at some time *t* if and only if *O*’s macroscopic-life processes have ceased’.

subject to the processes of biological decay for more than fifteen minutes) retain some of their individual properties and relations to one another (call the virtual corpses that have had their lives disrupted ‘disrupted-corpses’) but are not disposed to have their lives begin again. For example, the up quark that, in part, virtually composes a disrupted-corpse retains its essential property of having the electric charge of  $+\frac{2}{3} e$  and retains the external relation ‘being to the left of’ to another quark. Likewise, the up quark to the right of the quark mentioned in my previous sentence may retain the essential property of having an electric charge of  $+\frac{2}{3} e$  and the external relation of ‘being to the right of’ the quark mentioned in the previous sentence. But nothing about these simples having *these* properties and standing in *these* relations entails that they are still constituents of small-scale submicroscopic processes sufficient for submicroscopic-life.<sup>56</sup> For one thing the simples that compose an organism that has had its life suspended are related in a specific way; namely, causally related. Indeed, as van Inwagen writes, ‘parthood essentially involves causation. Too many philosophers have [wrongly] supposed that objects compose something when and only when they stand in some (more or less) stable) spatial relationship to one another’ (van Inwagen 1990, 81).

At least some of the causal relations that hold between simples that compose an organism whose life has been suspended might be, as van Inwagen notes, the mere ‘orbiting of electrons and the exchange of photons by charged particles’ (van Inwagen 1990, 147). I do not think, however, that these are the only processes of which these simples need to be constituents. This is for the same reason just mentioned, i.e., disrupted-corpses are virtually composed of orbiting electrons and charged particles that exchange photons.

How, then, does a disrupted-corpse (a virtual object) differ from a corpse that has had its life suspended (in other words, a suspended-corpse)? The only condition that van Inwagen cites to differentiate between disrupted-corpses and suspended-corpses is that the submicroscopic activity of a cryogenically frozen corpse (a suspended-corpse) and that of a corpse that has not been cryogenically frozen (a disrupted-

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<sup>56</sup> When I refer to an organism whose life has been suspended I mean to refer to an organism whose macroscopic-life has been suspended. I do not think that a submicroscopic-life can be suspended.

corpse)<sup>57</sup> is the fact that the ‘microlevel activity of a cryopreserved [corpse] is disposed to expand into its normal state at the moment sufficient energy should become available to it’ (Eberl 2008, 71), while the microlevel activity of a corpse that has not been cryogenically frozen is not disposed to expand into its normal state at the moment the same amount of energy should become available to it. Since this is the case, for any corpse, that corpse exists if and only if the microlevel activity of that corpse is disposed to expand into its normal state at the moment a certain amount of energy should become available to it. I call this the disposition condition:

**Disposition condition** = an object, *x*, is disposed to have its suspended life begin again if the requisite energy is supplied to the simples whose activity has been suspended.<sup>58</sup>

Given the above discussion, (MD2) suspension should be further qualified. The individual properties and relations that the simples have and bear to one another upon suspension need to be properties and relations of specific kinds. In particular, first, some of the relations that they bear to one another need to be causal relations. Second, the individual properties and relations that the simples have and bear to one another upon suspension need to be properties and relations that enable their bearers to be disposed to expand into macroscopic-life. I do not know, however, what any of those properties and relations might be and van Inwagen never tells us.

What I have said so far helps us to deal with an apparent contradiction in van Inwagen’s work. Van Inwagen writes, ‘[w]hat does it mean to say that I must die? Just this: that one day I shall be composed entirely of non-living matter; that is, I shall be a corpse’ (van Inwagen 1998b, 49). The question remains: how are we to make sense of these sentences given that van Inwagen believes that composite objects exist if and only if the simples that compose them are ‘caught up’ in a life but, when we die *we* shall be composed of *non-living* matter. Non-living matter is, I take it, matter that is not caught up in a life.

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<sup>57</sup> Disrupted-corpses, strictly speaking, do not exist given van Inwagen’s metaphysics of material constitution.

<sup>58</sup> I note here that this condition and surrounding issues will be important at several points thought this thesis.

Using the above description of what happens when a particular organism dies we may amend the problem this way: so long as an organism's life is not disrupted its macroscopic-life can cease and yet the organism can still exist. The reason for this is that the simples that compose an organism whose macroscopic-life has ceased can still be caught up in a submicroscopic-life. Submicroscopic lives display very few of the relevant characteristics usually taken to be definitive of macroscopic-life i.e., metabolic processes. The simples (or matter) that compose an organism whose life has been suspended are 'non-living' in the sense that they are not constituents of a macroscopic-life process.

Given these two modes of death, van Inwagen lays down the following two principles '[i]f a life has been disrupted, it can never begin again; any life going on after its disruption is not *that* life. If a life has been suspended, it can begin again; if the requisite energy is supplied to the simples whose activity has been suspended' (van Inwagen 1990, 147).<sup>59</sup> For example, the cat's life can begin again perhaps with 'a gentle prod...an electrical stimulus to the heart muscle of the just-thawed cat, or something of that sort' (van Inwagen 1990, 148).<sup>60</sup>

At this point I should clarify van Inwagen's position with regard to a debate that is internal to animalism, the debate over whether or not 'organicism' or 'somaticism' is true. I think that what I have said so far clarifies the situation somewhat. Somaticism is the animalist view that being alive is not a necessary condition for the persistence of human organisms.<sup>61</sup> According to Blatti there are some animalists on whose view 'a human animal (like all organisms) is a functionally organized physical object whose membership in a particular species is attributed to its origin and structure. Only if it is so gruesome as to destroy this structure will an organism's death bring about its nonexistence' (Blatti 2014, sect. 1.2). David Mackie, for example, is an animalist of the somaticist kind. He thinks that, given that an organism is a functionally organized physical object, so 'long as this organisation of constituent parts remains sufficiently

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<sup>59</sup> We will come to van Inwagen's reasons for saying that a life that's been disrupted can 'never begin again' later in this thesis.

<sup>60</sup> While, according to van Inwagen, the life has ceased, we should agree (unless there is a good reason not to) that the organism that has had its life suspended still exists. As van Inwagen writes, '[i]t is not absolutely essential to my position to say that the organism exists when its life is suspended, but I feel inclined to say that it does' (van Inwagen 1990, 148). I will return to this consideration momentarily.

<sup>61</sup> Somaticists may answer the persistence question 'do we have biological persistence conditions?' 'no.'

nearly intact' (Mackie 1999, 237) then that human organism persists. Since it is the organization of the constituent parts that is sufficient for the persistence of a particular human organism the somaticist animalist must reject *Life*. Instead, the somaticist says that an organism,  $O_2$ , at one time,  $t_2$ , and an organism  $O_1$  at an earlier time,  $t_1$ , are identical if and only if  $O_2$  'retains a sufficient degree of the life-apt structure of constituent parts previously exhibited by  $O_1$ ' (Blatti 2014, sect. 1.2). Organicism, on the other hand, is the animalist view that being alive is a necessary condition for the persistence of human organisms. This view is often attributed to Aristotle, Locke and Wilson (Wilson 1999, 89–99) and is the animalist view I have been assuming thus far.

One important difference between the two views is how they handle the problem of the apparent existence of corpses. Somaticist animalists say that you (the human organism) will persist after death so long as your corpse retains a sufficient degree of life-apt structure. Organicist animalists, on the contrary, think that you do not persist after your life processes have ceased. In fact, it follows from the organicist view that when you die you cease to exist. Uttering the words, for example, 'there rests Aunt Maud' after she has been subject to the normal room-temperature processes of biological decay for around fifteen minutes is, at least in the ontology room, false.<sup>62</sup>

The question remains, should we consider van Inwagen to be an organic animalist or a somaticist animalist? Van Inwagen's version of animalism has been classed as a form of 'organicism'. As Blatti notes, '[n]otable advocates of this view [i.e., the organicist view] include Olson and van Inwagen (1990)' (Blatti 2014, sect. 1.2). This is because van Inwagen believes that organisms persist if and only if their lives persist (implied by *Life*). This seems to me to be the correct reading of van Inwagen. Even when an organism has had its macroscopic-life processes cease van Inwagen still thinks that the organism exists. This is not because the organism retains life-apt structure but because the simples that compose this organism may be constituents of a process (or processes) sufficient for life. The simples that compose an organism whose life has been suspended are 'caught-up' in a (we might say) submicroscopic-life. He writes,

[w]hat about the organism whose life is suspended? Does it exist during the suspension of its life, or does it go out of existence when its life stops and come back into existence when its life starts again? (According to *Life*,

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<sup>62</sup> See van Inwagen (2014b, 1–14).

remember, if a life is suspended and then begins again, the revived organism is the organism whose life was suspended.) It is not absolutely essential to my position to say that the organism exists when its life is suspended, but I feel inclined to say that it does. That it does is a consequence of *Life* and my earlier contention that the life of a frozen, undamaged organism—in the actual world, I think, suspending the life of an organism as complicated as a cat must come down to freezing the organism; other laws of nature might allow other types of suspension—continues at the subchemical level (van Inwagen 1990, 148).

What is the difference between an organism that has had its macroscopic-life processes cease, but retains a sufficient degree of the life-apt structure of constituent parts, and an organism whose macroscopic-life processes have ceased, but whose life persists in virtue of its persisting subchemical life processes? There may be no difference here. If life-apt structure requires persisting subchemical processes, then both animalists of the somatic and organic kinds, at least concerning freshly dead and cryogenically preserved organisms, hold the same view. The difference between the two views, therefore, primarily comes down to what they think the persistence conditions are of not-recently-dead and not-cryogenically-preserved organisms, that is, normally functioning human organisms. Organicists claim that you persist in virtue of the fact that there are life-processes that are going on within you. Somaticists think that you persist so long as you retain a certain level of life-apt structure.

This should not be too problematic for this thesis, however. Whether or not one is an organist or a somaticist, both somaticists and organicists think that one ceases to exist when one's bodily remains have been decaying for long enough. It appears that everyone's bodily remains will decay substantially enough for them to die. For the purposes of this thesis I take organicist animalists as my target. However, one could reword my arguments with not much difficulty to take aim at somaticist animalists.

### **3.2 Life after death**

We have examined one case of life after death already. Cooled desiccated tardigrades can (given a few crucial assumptions) live after death. It also seems possible that cryogenically preserved cats may (again, given a few crucial assumptions) live after death. This kind of life after death, however, is not what this thesis is about. This thesis concerns life after death of the kind that is discussed by the authors who wrote

the Nicene Creed. The authors who wrote, ‘we look for...the life of the world to come.’

How is this kind of life after death different from the kind of life after death of the tardigrade or the frozen cat? I think that it is different in, primarily, two respects.<sup>63</sup>

First, when the authors of the Nicene Creed penned the above statement their expectation was that this statement would be true of a human being that was about to be, apparently, subject to the normal room-temperature processes of biological decay. All of those human organisms whose remains are (apparently) buried in, for example, the local cemetery would have been able to utter it. Existence in the world to come is not the preserve of those who can afford cryogenic services.

Second, ‘the world to come’ refers to a place at which all who have died will live again and where these people will come back to life *at the same time*. The life of the world happens at a time when Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Winston Churchill, you and I, for example, all come back to life simultaneously. Van Inwagen calls this time, the first period of time during the life of the world to come, the ‘Last Day’ (van Inwagen 1998b, 45). This is different to the kind of life after death that a tardigrade experiences for the life after death of a particular tardigrade,  $O_1$  may occur at a different time to the life after death of a different tardigrade  $O_2$ .

These are the primary ways in which the afterlife that this thesis concerns differs from the afterlife that a tardigrade may experience. There are two further assumptions that are held throughout this thesis that should be made clear. First, it is assumed that it is you that must survive. It cannot be a replica of you. It cannot be a replica of you that has, say, the same practical concerns as you.

Second, the being that satisfies the first personal pronoun ‘you’ in the afterlife must retain some psychological connectedness with the being that satisfies the first personal pronoun ‘you’ now. I do not mean to say that the being with which you are identical in the afterlife needs to be psychologically continuous with you in order for you to exist in the afterlife; this would be to accept a form of the Psychological Approach. I

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<sup>63</sup> Two different respects that are of first importance for the purposes of this thesis. There are other very important theological distinctions between the kind of life after death that a human organism that has been frozen and subsequently thawed may enjoy and the kind of life after death that the writers of the Nicene creed were talking about. Having one’s suspended life begin again before Christ’s return, for example, does not entail that one will no longer experience pain and suffering.

mean that you now and the being with which you will be identical in the afterlife need to share some of the same mental properties. Perhaps you need to share some of the same interests, desires and tastes. I say that this needs to be the case because an afterlife at which you survived but you survived in, say, a persistent vegetative state or as a being with none of the interests, desires or tastes that you had previously had is not, I take it, the kind of afterlife we are interested in. It will be assumed throughout this thesis that a being that has died will, in the afterlife, be psychologically connected to its earlier self (i.e., to the human organism that it was before it died).

Finally, one may note that I have omitted a part of the sentence from the Nicene Creed quoted above. The full sentence reads: we look for *the resurrection of the dead* and the life of the world to come. I have omitted ‘the resurrection of the dead’ for the following reason. Although many of the debates in the contemporary literature concerning life after death defend or attack the possibility of the resurrection of the dead, most contemporary philosophers of religion defending the possibility of the resurrection of the dead are not really defending the possibility of resurrection *per se*: the view that the very same body with which we are related in this life, we will be, in some way, the body with which we will be related in the afterlife.<sup>64</sup> What they are defending is the mere possibility that a human organism that exists before death can be identical with a human organism that exists in the world to come.

Consider the following two views: animalism and the simple soul view. The simple soul view says that you are identical to an immaterial substance that has no proper parts: a soul. You are not identical to a body-soul composite. On this view, it is relatively easy for you to exist after your death.<sup>65</sup> If you are an immaterial soul and the organism with which you are related on earth is, say, blown to bits by a bomb (and this, let us say, results in ‘your death’) then you can persist after your death by virtue of the fact that you are an immaterial soul. For on the simple soul view, you do not cease to exist when the organism with which you are related ceases to exist. The explosion has no effect upon your persistence on this view; it only affects the

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<sup>64</sup> I understand that this is a minimal explanation of resurrection but it will suffice for my purposes.

<sup>65</sup> Here one may understand the phrase ‘your death’ in the same way that one may understand ‘you’ve stubbed your toe’ given the simple soul view. On the simple soul view, you have died in virtue of the fact that the organism with which you are intimately related has died. Likewise, you have stubbed your toe in virtue of the fact that the organism with which you are intimately related has stubbed her toe.

organism with which you are intimately related. On this view, resurrection is not required for you to exist in the world to come.

The animalist, however, says that you exist after death if and only if the organism with which you are identical exists after your death. This is required because you are an organism. Thus, resurrection is, it seems, necessary for life after death given animalism; that there exists a certain set of material simples caught up in a life (and, in consequence, composing an organism) with which you are identical is required for life after death given animalism. Animalism therefore contrasts markedly on this point with the simple soul view.

Contemporary debates concerning the ‘possibility of resurrection’, however, do not primarily concern how it is that *any* person (whether persons be organisms or souls) persists into the afterlife but how it is that persons that are wholly material beings persist into the afterlife. The fact this question has become a question concerning whether or not the *resurrection* is possible is, therefore, somewhat misleading. In short, the ‘resurrection of the body’ is required for a materialist account of life after death, it is not for a simple soul account. This is why I will refer to the problem that I am concerned with in this thesis ‘the problem of life after death’ rather than ‘the problem of the resurrection’.

This completes my overview of animalism, our persistence conditions, death and life after death. To summarise, animalists believe that we are human organisms. In particular, they believe that we are numerically identical to human organisms. The animalists that I am concerned with in this thesis are those animalists who believe (i) that we are human organisms that are wholly material and (ii) that one human organism,  $x$ , at one time,  $t_1$ , is identical with another human organism,  $y$ , at another time,  $t_2$ , if and only if the simples that compose  $x$  and the simples that compose  $y$  are constituents of the same life (implied by *Life*). Animalists that accept (ii) are organic animalists. According to the organic animalists there are two ways by which an organism’s life may cease. It may be disrupted and it may be suspended. If an organism has had its life disrupted it can never begin again. If an organism has had its life suspended it can begin again. It was argued that van Inwagen, or any animalist that wants to believe that the survival of death is possible, should believe that death is the cessation of life; in particular, the cessation of macroscopic-life processes. ‘Life

after death' happens during an epoch in which there exist all of the human organisms that have previously died. In particular, it happens when there exist human organisms that have apparently been subject to the normal room-temperature processes of biological decay for around fifteen minutes. The first period of time that occurs during the life of the world to come we will call the 'Last Day.'

## PART II – SURVIVAL

In this section I introduce the argument from the problem of life after death and the more specific argument from the logical problem of life after death (Chapter 4). I then survey several responses already in the literature to the argument from the logical problem of life after death (Chapters 5 and 6). These responses take two necessity-claims as their target ((A) and (B) as set out at Chapter 4 section 1). I demonstrate that the majority of responses to the argument from the logical problem of life after death are successful in their aim: they demonstrate that it is not impossible for an organism that has died to exist again on the Last Day. I will return to the more general problem of life after death in part III. Finally, in this section I will also, for the sake of completeness, consider proposition (2) of both the logical problem of life after death and the, more general, problem of life after death.

## CHAPTER 4 – THE PROBLEM ARTICULATED

In this chapter I introduce the argument from the problem of life after death and, more specifically, the argument from the logical problem of life after death. The argument from the problem of life after death is the argument that this thesis is ultimately concerned with. It is this argument that I will defend in part III. In this section, however, I will merely state the argument from the problem of life after death and the argument from the logical problem of life after death. I focus, in this section, on this more specific argument because it is the argument that has been most widely discussed in the literature thus far.

### 4.1 The argument from the problem of life after death

I am now in a position to formulate the ‘argument from the problem of life after death’. It can be put as follows:

- (1) We are human organisms.
- (2) For any organism  $O_1$  at a time,  $t_1$ , and for any organism  $O_2$  at a time,  $t_2$ ,  $O_1$  and  $O_2$  are identical if and only if the simples that compose  $O_1$  and the simples that compose  $O_2$  are constituents of the same life.
- (3) We will die.
- (4) We will exist (after our deaths) on the Last Day.
- (5) It is unreasonable to believe propositions (1)–(4) at the same time.
- (6) The animalist who believes that human organisms that have died can exist again on the Last Day believes propositions (1)–(4).

*Therefore,*

- (7) It is unreasonable to believe that animalism is true and that human organisms that have died can exist again on the Last Day.

We might say the ‘problem of life after death’ is the problem that it is unreasonable to believe (1)–(4) simultaneously. The ‘argument from the problem of life after death’ supplements the problem of life after death with some further premises.

Premise (1) of the argument from the problem of life after death is the central animalist assertion as put forward and discussed in Chapter 1. Proposition (2) is a

version of the Biological Approach to personal persistence as outlined in Chapter 2 (in particular, (2) is entailed by *Life*). Proposition (3) is a relatively uncontroversial truth: we will all die.<sup>66</sup> I will discuss this more in a moment. Proposition (4) is the proposition that, so I am arguing, it is not reasonable to believe given (1)–(3). I will consider (5) in a moment. (6) is consistent with what has been said in Part I. (7) can be deduced from (5)–(6).

So far I have not given a justification for belief in premise (5) of the above argument; that is I have not given an argument as to why it is unreasonable to believe propositions (1)–(4) at the same time. One way to demonstrate that it is unreasonable to believe the conjunction of a certain set of propositions is to demonstrate that those propositions form a logically inconsistent set. A set of propositions is logically inconsistent if it is impossible for those propositions to all be true at the same time. To demonstrate that it is impossible for a certain set of propositions to all be true at the same time one can do a number of things. First, one can show that any one of the propositions in the set directly contradicts another proposition in that set. Second, one can show that any conjunction of any of the propositions in that set directly contradicts any of the other propositions in that set (or any other conjunction of any of the other propositions in that set).

Proponents of the logical problem of evil, for example, argued that it was unreasonable to believe that (1b) God is omnipotent, (2b) God is omniscient, (3b) God is omnibenevolent and that (4b) evil exists. Their strategy was to demonstrate that (1b)–(4b) form a logically inconsistent set; in particular, (since there is no direct contradiction to be found among propositions (1b)–(4b)) proponents of the logical problem of evil attempted to demonstrate that a direct contradiction could be deduced from (1b)–(4b).<sup>67</sup>

This is how the debate has progressed thus far with regards to the problem of life after death too. That is, like the problem of evil, the problem of life after death involves showing how it is that a contradiction can be deduced from the above propositions. Those who have put forward the problem of life after death intend to put forward an argument to the effect that it is impossible to believe that (1)–(4) are simultaneously

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<sup>66</sup> Unless, of course, Christ returns.

<sup>67</sup> To see how see section 9.1.

true. Olson, for example, writes ‘[o]n the view that you are an animal...existence after death seems to be ruled out. Once biological death has occurred, not even God can call you back into being’ (Olson 1999, 71). That is, if it is the case that when one dies not even God can bring one back into existence then it is logically impossible for one to exist again after one’s death because God can do anything that it is logically possible to do.

In the light of this we can restate the argument as follows:

#### **4.2 The argument from the logical problem of life after death**

- (1) We are human organisms.
- (2) For any organism  $O_1$  at a time,  $t_1$ , and for any organism  $O_2$  at a time,  $t_2$ ,  $O_1$  and  $O_2$  are identical if and only if the simples that compose  $O_1$  and the simples that compose  $O_2$  are constituents of the same life.
- (3) We will die.
- (4) We will exist (after our deaths) on the Last Day.
- (5') The above propositions (1)–(4) form a logically inconsistent set.
- (6') It is unreasonable to believe a set of propositions that are logically inconsistent.
- (7') The animalist who that believes that human organisms that have died can exist again on the Last Day believes propositions (1)–(4).

*Therefore,*

- (8') It is unreasonable to believe that animalism is true and that human organisms that have died can exist again on the Last Day.

Like the logical problem of evil, however, the propositions that together form the problem of life after death do not directly entail a contradiction.<sup>68</sup> That is, (1)–(4) do not, *prima facie* form a logically inconsistent set and, as such, premise (5') seems unjustified. In consequence, I will now explain why (1)–(4) have been taken to form a logically inconsistent set.

(1)–(4) form a logically inconsistent set if the following propositions are true:

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<sup>68</sup> More precisely, there is no syntactic contradiction to be found between propositions (1)–(4).

(A) necessarily, the life of an organism,  $O_1$ , at one time,  $t_1$ , is identical to the life of organism,  $O_2$ , at another time,  $t_2$ , if and only if, the simples that compose  $O_1$  and the simples that compose  $O_2$  are immanent-causally connected.

and

(B) necessarily, when we die the simples that last composed us will cease to bear any immanent-causal connection to any organism.

If (A) is true, then for us (human organisms) to exist on the Last Day (proposition (4)) the simples that compose us at the moment of our deaths need to bear some immanent-causal connection to an organism that exists on the Last Day. If (B) is true, however, then when we die (proposition (3)) the simples that compose us cease to bear any immanent-causal connection to any organism. In consequence, to believe (1)–(3) and (4) is to believe a contradiction (given the truth of (A) and (B)).

I have yet to provide an explanation of, and reasons for believing, (A) and (B). I will do so now.

Van Inwagen refers to (A) and (B) as two apparent ‘facts about the present age’ (van Inwagen 1998b, 45). Let us consider these two facts in reverse order. The first fact about the present age is the fact that (B) necessarily, when we die the simples that last composed us will cease to bear any immanent-causal connection to any organism. Take Judas Iscariot, for example. Judas, we are told, ‘hanged himself’ (Matthew 27:5). Not only that but Judas then apparently ‘fell headlong, his body burst open and all his intestines spilled out’ (Acts 1:18). Hanging oneself and subsequently having one’s body burst open and all of one’s intestines spill out is, uncontroversially, an instance of death; in particular, MD1 disruption. The simples that composed Judas were seemingly sufficiently disassociated from one another for Judas’ life-processes (both macroscopic and, eventually, submicroscopic) to have ceased. We can safely assume that after a certain period of time had elapsed (and after Judas’ remains had been placed in the ground and had been left there for a few minutes) Judas’ remains ceased to bear *any* significant causal relationship to each other (any causal relationship that may dispose them to expand into a life again should the requisite energy be supplied). Moreover, and crucially, these simples ceased to bear any

significant causal relationship to any other organism. They ceased, at least for a while, to be constituents of any life (macroscopic or submicroscopic). Let us call this ‘physical dissolution’ (van Inwagen 2015, 7).<sup>69</sup>

We have good reason to believe that this was not merely the fate of Judas but that it has been the fate of all human organisms that have died and will be the fate of all human organisms that will die. When we die, so it seems, the simples that compose us will cease to be constituents of a life, our remains will be burned or will rot and they will all cease to be (at least for a time) constituents of an organism. In consequence, (B) seems to be true. Necessarily, when we die the simples that last composed us will cease to bear any immanent-causal connection to any organism.

The second fact about our present age is that (A) necessarily, the life of an organism,  $O_1$ , at one time,  $t_1$ , is identical to the life of an organism,  $O_2$ , at another time,  $t_2$ , if and only if, the simples that compose  $O_1$  and the simples that compose  $O_2$  are immanent-causally connected.

Stating what immanent-causal relations are is difficult. I will try nonetheless.<sup>70</sup> Take an object, organism  $O_1$ , and an object, organism  $O_2$ .  $O_1$  and  $O_2$  exist at two different times (say,  $O_1$  exists at time  $t_1$  and  $O_2$  exists at some later time  $t_2$ ).  $O_1$  is immanent-causally related to  $O_2$  if and only if the causal relationships between the simples that compose  $O_1$  and the simples that compose  $O_2$  do not ‘go entirely outside’ (cf. Olson 2010, 56) of the simples that compose  $O_1$  and the simples that compose  $O_2$ .

Immanent-causation stands in contrast to transeunt causation. Let us say that I come across a sculpture,  $Sc_1$ . It is old, very rare and very fragile. If handled it too firmly it would fall to pieces. So that others may experience what this sculpture is like I take a high-resolution photograph from multiple angles of  $Sc_1$  and plan to move the sculpture to a museum. This picture is at such a high-resolution that when I zoom in on this picture I can see that it is composed of very dry, very small particles of clay. Let us say that I try to take the sculpture to the museum but as soon as I try to move it it crumbles. All that remains are these very dry, very small particles of clay. I sweep

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<sup>69</sup> This paper is now forthcoming in (Loose, Mengue, and Moreland, forthcoming). In this thesis I will cite the online version (van Inwagen 2015).

<sup>70</sup> For a very in-depth and rather challenging explanation of immanent-causation see Zimmerman (1997).

up the remains of the sculpture and take them home. When I get home, from these clay particles, I carefully and painstakingly put the pieces that composed the sculpture back together again; placing the parts of the sculpture in the exact spatial arrangement in which they had previously stood. I know that I have put them in the exact spatial arrangement because I can examine the high-resolution picture and see that they stand in the correct spatial arrangement. After this process there is another sculpture  $Sc_2$ . In this case  $Sc_2$  is (at least) qualitatively identical to  $Sc_1$ . This is not due to any immanent causal relationships between the particles of clay that compose  $Sc_1$  and the particles of clay that compose  $Sc_2$ , however. The causal processes between the simples that compose  $Sc_1$  do not cause  $Sc_2$  to exist at some later time. Rather, the causal relationships between  $Sc_1$  and  $Sc_2$  pass outside of  $Sc_1$  and  $Sc_2$  and through my mind, as it were.

Most of us, so it is argued, think that immanent causal relations are required between two ordinary objects for them to be considered identical. Olson asserts, for example, that ‘[i]f something tomorrow were exactly like your cat or your tooth brush is today, it wouldn’t *be* your cat or your toothbrush unless there were a significant immanent causal connection’ (Olson 2010, 57). Van Inwagen thinks that this is true of organisms too. That is, van Inwagen thinks that for the life of an organism,  $O_1$ , at one time,  $t_1$ , to be identical to the life of an organism,  $O_2$ , at another time,  $t_2$ , (and, in consequence, for  $O_1$  to be considered identical with  $O_2$ ) the simples that compose both  $O_1$  and  $O_2$  need to be immanent-causally related.<sup>71</sup> Call this the ‘immanent-causation requirement.’

Van Inwagen does not, however, give a direct argument as to why this needs to be the case. By this I mean that he never tells us why it is a consequence of his materialist metaphysics that the simples that compose two organisms need to be immanent-causally related in order for the organisms to be considered identical.<sup>72</sup> In a moment

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<sup>71</sup> Most philosophers who are concerned with the identity of organisms through death do not put the requirement in this way; in particular, they talk of the identity of organisms across time rather than the identity of lives across time. Since, however, van Inwagen’s criterion of organism identity across time requires the mention of lives I too will try to include mention of lives where possible. This is why I spell out the immanent-causation requirement by appeal lives.

<sup>72</sup> Defending the immanent-causation requirement without running a *reductio* is very difficult. As Olson notes, ‘[t]he trouble is, arguing that you can’t survive without an appropriate causal connection to your past is like arguing that contradictions can’t be true...No reasoning for these claims is going to be of much use, as it is bound to have a premise that is less obvious than the conclusion. At most one

(Chapter 5) I will consider an indirect argument for the immanent-causation requirement. First, however, since this thesis is a thesis that primarily engages with van Inwagen's materialist metaphysics of the human person, it is worth pointing out that van Inwagen does believe that the immanent-causation requirement is true.

Demonstrating that this is the case, however, is difficult. Especially, since van Inwagen says 'I confess...to an inability to supplement *Life* with a coherent, general statement of conditions that are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for the persistence of an individual life' (van Inwagen 1990, 157–158). Even so van Inwagen does seem to think that he can supply us with at least one necessary condition for the persistence of an individual life; namely, immanent-causation between simples that compose two organisms at different times is a necessary condition for the persistence of a life. Demonstrating this will be sufficient for my purposes.

Consider van Inwagen's concession that a human organism may persist through time when that organism's macroscopic-life processes have been suspended. Van Inwagen writes that the following is, at least, necessary for the persistence of lives, 'if a life is going on at  $t_1$  and  $t_3$  [assuming that it is the same life], then for any time between  $t_1$  and  $t_3$  there must be objects whose activity at  $t_2$  constitutes or results from that life' (van Inwagen 1990, 149). If we can translate 'activity at  $t_2$ ' as 'causal relationships at  $t_2$ ' then we can take van Inwagen here to mean that necessarily, for the life of an organism,  $O_1$ , at one time,  $t_1$ , to be identical to the life of an organism,  $O_2$ , at another time,  $t_2$ , the simples that compose both  $O_1$  and  $O_2$  need to be immanent-causally related. I do not think that this is an incorrect translation. I do not know what 'activity at  $t_2$ ' could mean if not, at least in part, 'causal relationships at  $t_2$ '.

In fact, the above passage commits van Inwagen to something stronger than the immanent-causation requirement; namely, what we may call the 'material and causal continuity requirement'. It says that, necessarily, the life of an organism,  $O_1$ , at one time,  $t_1$ , is identical to the life of an organism,  $O_3$ , at another time,  $t_3$ , if and only if, for any intervening period of time,  $t_2$ , there exists an organism,  $O_2$ ,<sup>73</sup> the simples of

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can try to articulate what would follow from rejecting the principle and hope that someone might find the result even more repugnant than the falsity of the principle itself' (Olson 2010, 59). I will follow Olson's strategy.

<sup>73</sup> Note that van Inwagen would prefer to say of an organism that has had its life suspended that it still exists (cf. van Inwagen 1990, 148).

which are continually immanent-causally connected to both  $O_1$  and  $O_2$ . If one believes in immanent-causation across temporal gaps (like Zimmerman does), however, one will find the above necessary condition for the persistence of lives too strong. For my purposes the weaker condition will do; what I have called the ‘immanent-causation requirement’.

As mentioned, van Inwagen, however, does not tell us why it is a consequence of his metaphysics of material constitution that the simples that  $O_1$  and  $O_2$  need to be immanent-causally related in order for  $O_1$  and  $O_2$  to be considered identical. He does, however, say that if a life is going on at  $t_1$  and  $t_3$ , then for any time between  $t_1$  and  $t_3$  there must be objects whose activity at  $t_2$  constitutes or results from that life so as to avoid ‘implausible consequences for the persistence of organisms’ (van Inwagen 1990, 149). I will examine, in a moment, one reason why for any organism  $O_1$  and any organism  $O_2$  to be identical the simples that compose  $O_1$  and  $O_2$  need to be immanent-causally related so as to avoid implausible consequences for the persistence of organisms.

For the time being, however, I should say that ‘physical dissolution’ (B) and the ‘immanent-causation requirement’ (A) together render (1)–(4) logically inconsistent. If, when we die, the simples that compose us cease to bear any immanent-causal relations to any organism (B) and in order for an organism,  $O_1$ , at one time,  $t_1$ , to be identical an organism,  $O_2$ , at another time,  $t_2$ , the simples that compose both organisms need to be immanent-causally related (A), then it is not possible that when we die, we can exist again on the Last Day.

## CHAPTER 5 – (A)

So far I have not given a defence of proposition (A). In this chapter I will give a defence of (A); in particular, I will show why it is the case that rejecting (A) is absurd. I will do this by considering a number of models of the resurrection at which (A) is false but which entail some absurdity. In consequence, this chapter will serve to demonstrate not only that (A) is plausible but that certain appeals to the possibility of our existing on the Last Day given animalism are to be avoided.

Secondarily, however, it will be demonstrated that while rejecting (A) may entail some implausible consequences for the persistence of human organisms, rejecting (A) does not commit one to a contradiction. In consequence, I will argue that the argument from the logical problem of life after death is unsound. While denying that (A) is implausible it is still not necessarily the case that the life of an organism,  $O_1$ , at one time,  $t_1$ , is identical to the life of an organism,  $O_2$ , at another time,  $t_2$ , if and only if, the simples that compose  $O_1$  and the simples that compose  $O_2$  are immanent-causally connected.

### 5.1 The recomposition model

One way to respond to the argument from the logical problem of life after death is to reject either (A) or (B). Some philosophers have tried to reject the immanent-causation requirement (A). I will now examine two ways by which one can reject immanent-causation requirement (sections 5.1 and 5.2). In the course of responding to these objections I will argue that if one rejects the immanent-causation requirement then this has some implausible consequences for the persistence of organisms. My responses to these objections will, in consequence, also serve as a defence of the immanent-causation requirement.

Importantly, (A) and (B) are both modal claims; in particular, they are necessity-claims. In this thesis I reserve uppercase letters ( $P, A, B, \dots$ ) for modal claims and lowercase letters ( $p, a, b, \dots$ ) for the non-modal versions of those claims. I will let ' $P$ ' and ' $p$ ' be variables. (A) and (B) are given above. To be clear if (A) = necessarily, the life of an organism,  $O_1$ , at one time,  $t_1$ , is identical to the life an organism,  $O_2$ , at another time,  $t_2$ , if and only if the simples that compose  $O_1$  and the simples that compose  $O_2$  are immanent-causally connected, then (a) = the life of an organism,  $O_1$ ,

at one time,  $t_1$ , is identical to the life of an organism,  $O_2$ , at another time,  $t_2$ , if and only if the simples that compose  $O_1$  and the simples that compose  $O_2$  are immanent-causally connected (the modal term is omitted). Likewise, if (B) = necessarily, when we die the simples that last composed us will cease to bear any immanent-causal connection to any organism, then (b) = when we die the simples that last composed us will cease to bear any immanent-causal connection to any organism.

One way by which one can show that some necessity-proposition  $P$  (in our case (A) and (B)) is not necessary is to demonstrate that possibly not- $p$  (in our case possibly not-a and possibly not-b). For if possibly not- $p$  then it is not the case that necessarily  $p$  (i.e.,  $P$ ). To demonstrate that possibly not- $p$  one can describe a possible world (or, describe a situation or, put forward a model or tell a story)<sup>74</sup> at which not- $p$  is true. In order to demonstrate that, for example, (A) is false one can describe a world at which not-a is true. A world at which an organism dies and ceases to exist and exists again on the Last Day without any immanent-causal relationships between the simples that compose that organism at the time of its death and the simples that compose it on the Last Day. Consider the following model.

Suppose that an organism,  $O_1$ , that has died via MD1 disruption and has undergone physical dissolution (the organism's remains bear no significant causal relationship to one another and are not constituents of any other life-processes). That is, in this circumstance what can God do on the Last Day but bring the simples that composed  $O_1$  moments before its death back together again and arrange them in the same spatial and chemical relationships in which they previously stood? This act on God's part, we might think, is similar to that of a watch-maker recomposing a watch that he has taken

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<sup>74</sup> I use the terms, 'story,' 'scenario,' 'model,' and 'world' interchangeably. This is primarily because van Inwagen uses these terms and, as far as I can tell, uses them synonymously. One might note, however, that there is an important distinction between these terms. One might note that a possible world 'is a whole coherent reality...in which  $p$  is true, of which the truth of  $p$  is an integral part' (van Inwagen 1998a, 77) while a 'story,' 'scenario' or 'model' is merely, say, a part of a seemingly 'whole coherent reality'. This may be how philosophers use the terms, however, when we commit  $S$  to imagining a possible world at which  $p$  is possibly true, we're not committing  $S$  to having imagined a whole coherent reality, but only a part of a seemingly whole coherent reality. That is, we're committing  $S$  only 'to imagin[ing] a  $p$ -verifying world while leaving matters visibly irrelevant to  $p$ 's truth unspecified' (Yablo 1993, 29). To be clear, then, in this paper I take the term 'world' in 'a  $p$ -verifying world that leaves matters visibly irrelevant to  $p$ 's truth unspecified' to be equivalent to a 'story,' 'scenario' or 'model.'

apart.<sup>75</sup> Trenton Merricks notes that, for a very long time, this was the dominant view of the resurrection; ‘resurrection was akin to the reassembly of a watch’ (Merricks 2001, 186).<sup>76</sup> This is supposed to be one way in which God can achieve the resurrection of the dead without requiring that there be immanent causal connections between the organism that has died and an organism that exists on the Last Day.

Van Inwagen considers a model of the resurrection like this and argues that it commits one to some implausible consequences for the persistence of organisms. In consequence, van Inwagen concludes that there is ‘some sort of material and causal continuity’ (van Inwagen 2015, 7) between an organism that has died before the Last Day and an organism that exists on the Last Day. Let us call this model the ‘recomposition model’ after God’s attempt at recomposing the organism that has died and undergone physical dissolution.

To explain the recomposition model in more detail van Inwagen gives the following analogy, based loosely on Aristotle’s metaphysics. This story is supposed to illustrate the possibility of God’s resurrecting a human organism by recomposing it from the simples that composed it at the moment of its death. Van Inwagen writes,

Augustine’s manuscript consisted of a certain ‘parcel’ of matter upon which a certain form had been impressed. It ceased to exist when this parcel of matter was radically deformed. To recreate it, God needed only to collect the matter (in modern terms, the atoms) that once composed it and reimpress that form upon it (in modern terms cause these atoms to stand in the same spatial and chemical relationships they previously stood in) (van Inwagen 1978, 118).<sup>77</sup>

According to the recomposition model God needs only to bring the simples that composed the manuscript back together again and arrange them in the correct spatial and chemical relationships that they previously stood in for that manuscript to exist again. Similarly, the recomposition model says that the same could, conceivably, be done with the simples that compose a human organism.

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<sup>75</sup> Nevertheless, of course, the watch on a watch-maker’s desk retains a large proportion of its characteristic structure. A corpse that has been burnt or has succumbed to rot does not.

<sup>76</sup> See also Bynum (1995).

<sup>77</sup> The term ‘atom’ is, for our purposes, synonymous with ‘simple’.

Van Inwagen, however, rejects the recomposition model. He writes,

The atoms of which I am composed occupy at each instant the positions they do because of the operations of certain processes within me (those processes that, taken collectively, constitute my being alive). Even when I become a corpse –provided I decay slowly and am not, say, cremated– the atoms that compose me will occupy the positions relative to one another that they do occupy largely because of the processes of life that used to go on within me: or this will be the case for at least some short period. Thus a former corpse in which the processes of life have been ‘started up again’ may well be the very man who was once before alive, provided the processes of dissolution did not progress too far while he was a corpse. But if a man does not simply die but is totally destroyed (as in the case of cremation) then he can never be reconstituted, for the causal chain has been irrevocably broken. If God collects the atoms that used to constitute that man and ‘reassembles’ them, they will occupy the positions relative to one another they occupy because of God’s miracle and not because of the operation of the natural processes that, taken collectively, were the life of that man (van Inwagen 1978, 119).

The important point here is that the simples that compose the organism that exists on the Last Day are caused to stand in the relevant relations to one another not by the life processes that were going on ‘inside’ an organism that had died but by God. The underlying contention here is that for an organism,  $O_1$ , at one time to be identical with an organism,  $O_2$ , at another time, both organisms need to be composed of simples that are immanent-causally related.<sup>78</sup>

But why hold that immanent-causation between organisms at times is required for organism identity across time? The primary reason for holding the immanent-causation requirement to be true is that rejecting it leads to an absurdity. Let us assume for *reductio* that it is true that God could bring me back from the dead in say, a thousand years, by recomposing me from the simples that composed me at the time of my death as the recomposition model demands. If, so the argument goes, God can

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<sup>78</sup> For more on this point see (Zimmerman 2013, 134–146; Olson 2010, 56–60; van Inwagen 1998b, 47).

do this, then he can also bring me back from the dead by recomposing me from the simples that composed me when I was seven, twenty or that compose me now.<sup>79</sup> If God can do this, then God could make it the case that (in, say, a thousand years from now) the simples that compose me now and the simples that composed me when I was seven stand in the exact same spatial and chemical relations in which they stood when they composed me a thousand years (and over) earlier. If God were to do this, then there would exist two organisms that are equal candidates for identification with me.

What are the ramifications of this for the possibility of life after death? Van Inwagen asks: in this scenario which organism would be me? He replies, '[n]either or both, it would seem, and, since not both, neither' (van Inwagen 1995, 486). I could not be both because it is logically impossible (assuming, as we are, that stage theory is false) for one concrete object to be wholly in two places at once.<sup>80</sup> So, I must be neither. If I must be neither, however, then I have not been brought back from the dead.

Now someone may object that God would never make it the case that there are two organisms in existence on the Last Day that both have equal claim to being identified as me. Van Inwagen agrees that this may well be the case. More generally, God may never make it the case that there exist two organisms on the Last Day that both have equal claim to identity with an organism that existed and died before the Last Day. But the point is that if God were to, say, recompose me from the simples that composed me at the moment of my death (and leave the simples that composed me at aged seven, and all other ages for that matter, in the ground), then I would be identical (according to the recomposition model) with the organism that God has created. In this case, however, I am only identical to this post-resurrection organism in virtue of the fact that God does not also bring back together the simples that composed me when I was seven. My identity with this organism is dependent on the fate of some

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<sup>79</sup> This is provided, of course, that the simples that composed me when I was seven, twenty or now are not the same simples.

<sup>80</sup> One may think that this principle is false. One may argue that it is logically possible for a time-traveller to go and meet herself, or for Christ to be wholly present in, for example, the bread and the wine offered in the Eucharist (see Pruss (2013)). I assume that van Inwagen thinks that these examples are incoherent or, in any case, he may add the caveat 'except for cases of time-travel' or 'except for cases of the multiple location of Christ in the bread and the wine' or, indeed, both.

other set of simples (the set of simples that composed me aged seven). This, so van Inwagen concludes, is absurd. He writes,

it is absurd, it is utterly incoherent, to suppose that [my] identity could depend on what might happen to some atoms other than the atoms that compose [me]. In the end, there would seem to be no way round the following requirement: If I am a material thing, then if a man who lives at some time in the future is to be *I*, there will have to be some sort of material and causal continuity between this matter that composes me now and the matter that will then compose that man (van Inwagen 1995, 486).

David Hershenov (2003), however, is not so quick to reject recombination models. Hershenov thinks that van Inwagen's argument trades on an intuition that not everyone holds. Hershenov says that his intuition is not that the recomposed manuscript is a *new* manuscript, but that it is the same manuscript as the manuscript that was burned. Likewise, Hershenov takes issue with van Inwagen's suggestion that a recomposed human organism is not the same human organism as one that had previously been destroyed.<sup>81</sup> In both cases Hershenov thinks that van Inwagen ignores an important feature of recombination. Hershenov thinks that 'if the parts [of an object], no matter how small and scattered, are deliberately reassembled *in accordance with the original intention of its maker*, it strikes me as intuitively the same object' (Hershenov 2003, 27).<sup>82</sup> That is, Hershenov thinks that once we attend to the fact that the artificer is recomposing the object that was previously destroyed we, intuitively, think that the recomposed object is the same object as the object that was destroyed. Hershenov provides his own thought experiment to pump our intuitions in this direction.

Consider, for example, a sculpture in an artist's studio. This sculpture is being prepared to be moved by the master sculptor's assistant for display in a local gallery. The assistant breaks the sculpture down into smaller bits so as to aid its transit.

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<sup>81</sup> Van Inwagen offers three examples. An ancient manuscript that is burned and then (apparently) reassembled by God, a human organism that has been blown to bits by a bomb and (apparently) reassembled by God, and a child's house of blocks that is knocked down and (apparently) reassembled by a parent. Van Inwagen thinks that all of these examples are consistent with the intuition that the reassembled object is not identical with the object that was burned, knocked down, or blown to bits (see Hershenov (2003, 36 fn. 5)). Another popular example is the reassembly of the Colossus of Rhodes by some LA hoteliers. See Sturch (2015, 348) and Olson (2010, 52).

<sup>82</sup> The italics are mine.

Hershenov claims that when a sculpture has been broken down into its constituent parts (no matter how small) and these parts are brought back together again at some later time (no matter by whom) this sculpture will be the same sculpture as the sculpture that was earlier broken down into its constituent parts. This is regardless of the fact that there are no immanent causal relations between the sculpture before it was taken apart and the sculpture that exists at some later time after the master sculptor's assistant has been to work. Indeed, this seems to be the intuition that most of us have about sculpture identity. Most of us seem to believe, when watching a sculptor's assistant, for example, break a sculpture down into its constituent parts (so as, for example, to ease its transit from the sculptor's workshop to an art gallery) and then put it back together again that the sculpture pre-disassembly is the same sculpture as the reassembled sculpture. Hershenov claims that, like our sculptor's assistant, God should be understood to be the reassembler of our bodies. The important point, says Hershenov, is that whenever the simples that compose a human organism at the moment of its death are reassembled they are reassembled 'in accordance with the original intention of its maker' (Hershenov 2003, 27). If the simples that composed me at the time of my death are not reassembled in accordance with the original intention of my maker then the resulting organism would not be identical with me.

Perhaps Hershenov has successfully pumped our intuitions regarding the recomposition model. There is, however, a response. Whether or not Hershenov's added consideration of God's intention makes the recomposition model more intuitive, his view still has an implausible consequence for the persistence of human organisms; namely, that if one accepts the recomposition model, then it is still possible (on Hershenov's view) for God to recompose me from the simples that composed me when I was seven and the simples that composed me when I was twenty. It is still possible that there exist two organisms on the Last Day that are both equally good candidates for identification with an organism that has died.

Hershenov, however, responds to this argument. His response has two steps. First, Hershenov argues 'van Inwagen's thought experiments do not support the conclusion that the resurrection is impossible' (Hershenov 2003, 31). That is, in order for van Inwagen's thought experiments to work we must accept that resurrection by recomposition is at least logically possible. Even though it seemingly entails an

absurdity (i.e., that my identity could depend on what might happen to some simples other than the simples that compose me) holding to the recomposition model does not commit one to a contradiction.

Second, Hershenov develops a principle that stops his theory entailing the absurdity that it is possible that there exist two organisms on the Last Day that are equal candidates for identification with the organism that has died. Hershenov argues that on the occasion that God recomposes two candidates for identification with you, you would be identical to the individual that God creates from the simples that composed you at the moment of your death and not the individual that God creates from the simples that composed you aged seven. To defend this claim Hershenov appeals to our intuitions again. He writes, '[m]ost of us who believe that we can cease to exist and then reappear, insist that the reassembly must be of the parts we had *at the time of our destruction*' (Hershenov 2003, 31).<sup>83</sup> In this case, of the two organisms that exist on the Last Day, I would be the organism that is composed of the simples that last composed me (i.e., that composed me at the moment of my death and not when I was, say, twenty years old). Moreover, says Hershenov, this is not *ad hoc*; we already believe in the possibility of intermittent existence. We already believe that some things cease to exist and come into existence again at some later time. Moreover, we already believe that these things exist again if and only if they have properties that are similar to the properties they had at the last moment of their existence. To support this claim Hershenov provides us with some examples. Hershenov writes, '[t]he same point holds in other cases of intermittent existence such as trials, classes and theatrical plays. A trial can be suspended but it must resume where it left off or it would be a new trial' (Hershenov 2003, 32). The legal teams must be relatively similar, the jury must be relatively similar and the charges must be the same.

There is a further response to Hershenov's argument. The response involves running another *reductio*. However, this *reductio*, we might think, is stronger than the last. This argument attempts to demonstrate that the recomposition model contradicts the

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<sup>83</sup> The italics are mine.

principle that any two distinct things are necessarily distinct and so could not become one and the same thing.<sup>84</sup>

Let us assume, again, for *reductio* that Hershenov is correct. An organism  $O_2$  that exists on the Last Day is identical to an organism  $O_1$  that died before the Last Day if and only if (i) the simples that compose  $O_2$  are the simples that composed  $O_1$ , (ii) these simples stand in the same spatial and chemical relationships that the simples that composed  $O_1$  had previously stood in and (iii) the simples that compose  $O_2$  are made to stand in the relations in which they stand because God intends them to. The following argument against Hershenov involves the introduction of cannibals.

There is an age-old worry about the resurrection of cannibals and those who have been eaten by cannibals. I adapt this worry slightly for my purposes. Let us say that a certain traveller strays into a certain violent and primitive cannibal's territory. The cannibal and the traveller are *qualitatively* identical in the following respect. The set of simples that compose the cannibal stand in the exact same spatial and chemical relations to one another as the set of simples that compose the traveller (and continue to do so).<sup>85</sup> Let us say that the cannibal is spooked by seeing another human being who is qualitatively identical to him and so catches the traveller and kills him. Feeling peckish the cannibal immediately begins to consume the traveller. The cannibal consumes the whole traveller. Let us say that,<sup>86</sup> rather unexpectedly, all of the simples that composed the traveller come to compose the cannibal; eventually replacing all of the simples that composed the cannibal previously. Let us also say that, at this point, the cannibal dies. In this instance, the cannibal and the traveller are, to use Mark Johnston's phrase, 'perimortem duplicates' (Johnston 2010, 32). At the moments of their respective deaths the cannibal and the traveller 'have exactly the same bodily matter in the same bodily organization' (Johnston 2010, 32). As when they met the set

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<sup>84</sup> I assume that this principle is true. I should mention, however, that David Lewis has put forward an argument to the effect that this principle is false. See, in particular, Lewis (1993b). I am unconvinced by his argument.

<sup>85</sup> One may object, as my friend Ella Walsh objects, by saying 'that's not possible!'. Ella pointed out that the arrangement of the simples that compose one at the time of one's death depend upon a certain set of very many, very lengthy, causal processes. The simples that compose one's neurons, for example, stand in the certain relations to one another that they do by virtue (at least in part) of the particular experiences that one has had. The cannibal and the traveller, so Ella protests, will surely not have had the same experiences. What Ella is objecting to is that this scenario is at all likely. Mark Johnston, however, points out that this scenario need not be at all likely. What's needed here is broad logical possibility (what Johnston calls '*per se* possibility' (Johnston 2010, 32).

<sup>86</sup> *Contra* Athenagoras who thought that human flesh was not digestible.

of simples that compose the cannibal stand in the exact same spatial and chemical relations to one another as the set of simples that compose the traveller. The question remains: when God collects these simples (the simples that composed the traveller and the cannibal at the moment of their deaths) together again on the Last Day and makes them stand in the same spatial and chemical relationships in which they stood at the moment of their deaths, which (the cannibal or the traveller) would exist as a result of this action?

It is consistent with Hershenov's view (as it stands) that, on this occasion, on the Last Day, two organisms (the traveller and the cannibal) could become one organism. That is, if it is true that an organism on the Last Day is identical with an organism at the moment of its death just in case the simples that compose the organism on the Last Day are the same as<sup>87</sup> (and stand in the exact same spatial and chemical relations as) those simples that composed the organism at the moment of its death then, so it seems, it is possible that both the cannibal and the traveller are identical with the resurrected organism. This, Johnston argues, 'yields a sheer contradiction given the necessity of distinctness, the principle that any two distinct things are necessarily distinct and so could not ever become one and the same' (Johnston 2010, 34).

A response is available to Hershenov. He may add a 'no closest predecessor' (cf. Zimmerman 2013, 138) clause to his criteria of personal identity.<sup>88</sup> That is, Hershenov could accept that for a pre-mortem organism,  $O_1$ , to be identical to a post-mortem organism,  $O_2$ ,  $O_2$  needs to be composed of the same simples that composed  $O_1$  at the time of  $O_1$ 's death and these simples need to stand in the exact same spatial and chemical relations that they stood in when they composed  $O_1$ , but add to this criterion that this is only the case when there is no 'equally close predecessor' (Zimmerman 2013, 138) to that organism. Where an equally close predecessor is an organism whose perimortem state is just as similar to the initial state of the divinely reconstructed organism, and which is equally similar in other respects that matter (cf. Zimmerman 2013, 138). With this no-equally-close-predecessor clause in place Hershenov can argue that his theory does not entail that the principle of the necessity

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<sup>87</sup> Hershenov affirms this view. He writes, 'the parts an entity had at its most recent moment of existence are necessary for it to exist later' (Hershenov 2003, 32).

<sup>88</sup> Zimmerman uses 'no equally close predecessor' and 'no closest predecessor.' He uses the latter more often than the former. I think he should have used only 'no-equally-close-predecessor.' I will, in consequence, use 'no-equally-close-predecessor' where possible.

of distinctness is false. He may argue that  $O_1$  and  $O_2$  are identical if and only if there is no equally close predecessor.

Hershenov may also add that in normal circumstances (circumstances where there is not a perimortem duplicate) reassembly will bring back the deceased human organism. Moreover, he may also argue that even when there are perimortem duplicates there may, on occasion, be reasons to think that there is some distinction between them that means that it is appropriate to deem only one of them identical with the post-mortem organism. He may argue, for example, that in the situation where there are two suitable candidates for identification with a particular post-mortem organism, the post-mortem organism will be identical to the pre-mortem organism that is, say, *temporally* closest. In our above story this would be the cannibal. At the time of resurrection, the cannibal will be the organism that was most recently composed by the simples that compose the post-mortem organism.

This may not be the only reason we can provide for asserting that a particular post-mortem organism may not have two equally close predecessors.<sup>89</sup> Whatever the reason, however, this is in one sense a pyrrhic victory. Whether or not one can provide reasons as to why in normal circumstances there will be no-equally-close predecessor, it is still possible, on the recomposition model, for a post-mortem organism to be identical with two pre-mortem organisms and for these pre-mortem organisms to have equal claim to identity with the post-mortem organism. In consequence, a no-equally-close predecessor clause will be required.

What is wrong with accepting a no-equally-close-predecessor clause? The problem is that accepting an account of identity that (even if only in principle) requires a no-equally-close-predecessor clause also requires that one accept that the, rather plausible,<sup>90</sup> ‘only  $x$  and  $y$ ’ principle is false.<sup>91</sup> Put simply, the ‘only  $x$  and  $y$ ’ principle states that when considering whether or not  $x$  is numerically identical to  $y$  (or, for our purposes,  $O_1$  is identical to  $O_2$ ) the identification of  $x$  with  $y$  can only depend on facts about  $x$  and  $y$  ( $O_1$  and  $O_2$ ) and the relations between them and not about individuals

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<sup>89</sup> See Zimmerman (2010, 138–139).

<sup>90</sup> I do not have sufficient space to provide a lengthy defence of the ‘only  $x$  and  $y$ ’ principle here. Nor, however, do I think that the principle needs much of a defence. For a defence of the ‘only  $x$  and  $y$ ’ principle, see Noonan (1985).

<sup>91</sup> To be clear, Zimmerman thinks that van Inwagen should reject the ‘only  $x$  and  $y$ ’ principle regardless of the fact that it is required for the falling-elevator model. I will consider it in chapter 6.

other than  $x$  and  $y$  e.g.  $z$  (or, for our purposes  $O_3$ ). On the recomposition model, however, whether or not some pre-mortem organism,  $O_1$ , is identical with some post-mortem human organism,  $O_2$ , depends upon its being the case that there is no equally good candidate for identification with  $O_2$ , say,  $O_3$  (an organism that, say, is composed of the same simples as  $O_2$  and these simples stand in the exact same spatial and chemical relations as the simples that compose  $O_2$ ). The identification of  $O_1$  and  $O_2$  in this case depends on the fate of some other organism; namely,  $O_3$ . In particular, it depends on there not being another candidate that is possibly identical to  $O_2$ .

If the animalist wants to avoid a no-equally-close-predecessor clause in her account of personal identity she must, so it seems, reject recomposition models of the resurrection. One way to avoid a no-equally-close-predecessor clause is to hold that organisms persist across time when and only when the simples that compose them are immanent-causally connected. The animalist must, then, give a model of the resurrection such that the  $x$ s at time  $t_1$  and the  $y$ s at time  $t_3$  are constituents of the same continuing natural process and not two different processes; one brought about by the natural course of things the other brought about by God. In particular, there needs to be a relevant ‘causal chain’ (van Inwagen 1978, 119) between the  $x$ s at  $t_1$  and the  $y$ s at  $t_3$  such that the  $x$ s and the  $y$ s are both a part of the same life. I agree with van Inwagen when he says that when considering whether or not it is possible for God to raise, say, Socrates from the dead (i.e., whether it is possible for Socrates to be identical with some organism that exists on the Last Day)

[i]n the end there would seem to be no way round the following requirement: if Socrates was a material thing, a living organism, then, if a man who lives at some time after Socrates’ death and physical dissolution is to be Socrates, there will have to be some sort of material and causal continuity between the matter that composed Socrates at the moment of his death and the matter that any time composes that man (van Inwagen 2015, 7).

One must, therefore, come up with an account of the resurrection at which there exists an immanent causal chain between an organism that has died and an organism that exists on the Last Day. Before I consider such accounts, however, I will consider a final model that holds that a particular human organism at time  $t_1$  and  $t_3$ , although differentiated by a break in a natural process, might still be considered to be the same

human organism. At the end of this chapter I will discuss the ramifications of what has been said so far for the argument from the logical problem of life after death.

## 5.2 Miraculous-event model

Before I move on to consider some rejections of (B), I must first consider another model at which (A) is false. This model stipulates that because van Inwagen's thesis entails that an organism  $O^*$  exists in virtue of event  $L^*$ , it follows that God need not reassemble the simples that compose  $O^*$ , nor need there be any immanent-causal chain between specific activities of simples at times. Rather, all God needs to do is miraculously restart the life,  $L^*$ , in virtue of which organism  $O^*$  exists.<sup>92</sup>

The argument is an argument by analogy. The argument goes like this: there are a wide variety of events that cease to exist and then exist again. Lives are events and, therefore, lives can probably cease to exist and then exist again too.<sup>93</sup> Which events are gappy? Richard Sturch (2015) appeals to cricket Test Matches. Test Matches are cricket matches that are played over a number of days. There are occasions when all the players on the field and spectators in the stands go home. On the occasion that the umpire declares that play (and, so says Sturch, the match) has ceased, then that event (the match), so it is argued, has ceased.<sup>94</sup> But it can begin again. It begins the next day. No one doubts that the match that begins the next day is the same match as the match that had occurred the day before. It may even be the case that the players of the match have changed, as Sturch notes, 'there might even be a "twelfth man" or substitute among them, replacing a member who was unwell. It is enough that they be recognizably the same team' (Sturch 2015, 350). Test Matches are events that are gappy. Likewise, lives (since they are a species of event) may have similar properties to Test Matches; namely, they can cease, their constituents can disperse and yet the same life can exist again. Sturch writes: '[i]n a Test Match, there are long periods when the ground and stands are empty and no play takes place, yet no-one says that the resumed game may only be a duplicate of that of the previous day. The same holds for a resurrection intended from the beginning' (Sturch 2015, 347). Sturch

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<sup>92</sup> A model similar to the 'miraculous-event model' described here was originally put forward by Sturch (2015).

<sup>93</sup> Hershenov (2003) has a similar argument. He identifies that there are things that can undergo intermittent existence. Hershenov does not exploit the fact that these things are events in his argument.

<sup>94</sup> One may object at this point that the match does not cease but continues. I will accept, for the sake of argument, that the match ceases.

argues that just like Test Matches are intended to be gappy so, if the lives of human organisms are intended to be gappy, they can be.

To be clear this suggestion need not violate condition (i.ii) of *Life*. One might respond by arguing that since (i.ii) says that lives must be ‘self-maintaining’. That is, certain living beings, for example, consume certain simples and excrete other simples through breathing and exhaling, eating and defecating and since this activity happens within the self-maintaining natural process that results in the existence of human organisms, if God restarted a life, then the life that was composed of  $x$ s at  $t_1$  and the life that was composed of the  $y$ s at  $t_3$  would not be a self-maintaining process but a process maintained by God.<sup>95</sup> That is, the breathing and exhaling, eating and defecating would have to be restarted and, as such, maintained by God and not the life itself.

This response, however, will not work. One may argue that God could, at  $t_3$ , restart the same self-maintaining life that existed at  $t_1$ . It is only after the life has restarted that the self-maintaining condition really matters. That is, if *Life* is true and it is possible that God could restart a life then the token event that is  $O^*$ 's life –  $L^*$  – could be restarted by God, resulting in  $O^*$ 's continued existence. In consequence, it seems that one could keep much of van Inwagen's metaphysics and refuse to concede that some sort of immanent causal chain between the activity of the  $x$ s at time  $t_1$  and the activity of the  $y$ s at time  $t_3$  is required.

I am inclined to think that the miraculous-event model *may* be a solution for some form of Christian materialism; but it cannot be a solution for the animalist and certainly not for van Inwagen. This is for two reasons.

First, to accept this solution animalists would have to abandon their understanding of the nature of lives. Many animalists think that once a particular life has ceased in the usual way it can never begin again. Van Inwagen, for example, writes, that ‘[i]f a life has been disrupted, it can never begin again; any life that is going on after its disruption is not *that* life’ (van Inwagen 1990, 147-148). In consequence, if van Inwagen were to allow that human lives can be gappy (that is, human organism  $O^*$  can exist at  $t_1$ , cease to exist at  $t_2$ , and then exist again at  $t_3$ ), then van Inwagen would

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<sup>95</sup> Of course, on van Inwagen's view there would be two lives not one on this occasion.

be allowing that the same human organism could exist in virtue of a *new* event since any life after disruption would not be, as he says, ‘*that* life’ (van Inwagen 1990, 148). To accept the miraculous-event model, therefore, would be to give up on this understanding of lives.

Why is it the case that a life that has ceased can never begin again? We are not told by van Inwagen nor (as far as I am aware) are we told by any other animalist. We can supply a reason for the animalist, however. The animalist may argue that it is, perhaps, a law of nature that natural events once they have ceased cannot begin again. There is a hint at this view in van Inwagen’s work. Van Inwagen likens God’s bringing me back from the dead after my life has been disrupted and my remains have undergone physical dissolution to God’s bringing back ‘the snows of yesteryear’ (van Inwagen 1995, 486) or the ‘the light of other days’ (van Inwagen 2015, 7). The point is, so it seems, that like it is the case that it is conceptually impossible for a snowfall (a natural event) that occurs in 2020 to be the same snowfall as a snowfall that occurred in 1950 if the snowfall that occurred in 1950 ceased to exist, so it is conceptually impossible for a life (a natural biological process) to cease and begin again.

One may argue, therefore, that there is an important disanalogy between Test Matches and lives. While it may be the case that Test Matches are events that are gappy, natural biological processes are not and cannot be gappy. In order to demonstrate that God may cause the life that has ceased (a natural biological processes) to begin again we would need an example of a natural biological processes that is gappy. It is this last argument that I find most persuasive and which, I hazard, most animalists that do not think life after death plausible, will put forward.<sup>96</sup>

Second, not only this but the miraculous-event model cannot be true if one has a deflationary view about the ontology of events (as van Inwagen seems to: see footnote

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<sup>96</sup> It has been suggested to me, however, that the flowering of a plant or the budding of a tree are natural biological processes that can be stopped by cold-weather snaps, and then re-start when the weather warms. One can respond to this argument, I think, by saying that ‘budding’ is not a single event but rather is a gerrymandered collection of more fundamental overlapping processes that each stop and start. In the case of a budding flower or tree we, perhaps, have two processes (or more) occurring that stop and start. I think that this point can be extended to a variety of natural processes that seemingly stop and re-start.

34). Van Inwagen writes that he hopes to be able to ‘show that all true statements that apparently imply the existence of events can be paraphrased as statements solely about the changing properties of and changing relations among substances’ (van Inwagen 2007, 203). That is, van Inwagen does not want to be committed to the existence of events and so hopes to be able to find a way to paraphrase them away. If events do not exist, however, then God could not miraculously restart the life,  $L^*$ , in virtue of which organism  $O^*$  exists.<sup>97</sup> This is for the simple reason that there is no life,  $L^*$ , in virtue of which organism  $O^*$  exists; there is nothing for him to restart.<sup>98</sup> To put it another way the sentence: God can restart the life,  $L^*$ , in virtue of which organism  $O^*$  exists, expresses an incoherent act-description. Lives do not exist and, as such, there is nothing for him to restart.

We are now in a position to return to the argument from the logical problem of life after death; in particular, premise (5'). Premise (5') states: The above propositions (1)–(4) form a logically inconsistent set. Is premise (5') true? Given the above discussion it seems that the answer is ‘no’. Premises (1)–(4) form a logically inconsistent set if (A) and (B) are true. It has been demonstrated, however, that while one may reasonably believe, say, (a), (A) it is not true. That is, while one may reasonably believe that

(a) the life of an organism,  $O_1$ , at one time,  $t_1$ , is identical to the life of an organism,  $O_2$ , at another time,  $t_2$ , if and only if, the simples that compose  $O_1$  and the simples that compose  $O_2$  are immanent-causally connected

(a) is not *necessary*. (A) is a necessity-claim: it is true if and only if its non-modal version, (a), is true at every possible world. (A) is not true, however, because there is

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<sup>97</sup> One may argue that one can, in this instance, rephrase the objection in a way that does not make mention of lives. In this instance, it strikes me, however, that one will have to phrase the objection in terms of the changing properties and changing relations of one set of simples and the changing properties and changing relations of another set of simples. Namely, God can make it the case that the changing relations and changing properties of one set of simples are the same changing properties and changing relations of another set of simples. God does not restart the life but makes it the case that a certain set of simples is arranged in such a way that it is identical with a previously existing set of simples. This rephrased argument would, as far as I can see, face similar problems to Hershenov’s argument mentioned above. It would require, to some extent, reassembly on God’s part.

<sup>98</sup> One may ask ‘what are we to make of *Life*, which made explicit mention of lives?’ I hazard that van Inwagen will want to paraphrase the mention of lives made in *Life* too.

a world at which (a) is false. The world at which the recomposition model is true, for example, is such a world. Now, admittedly, the world at which the recomposition model is true is also a world at which one must accept a no-equally-close-predecessor clause in one's account of personal identity. This is not desirable for one accepts a no-equally-close-predecessor clause at the expense of denying the 'only  $x$  and  $y$ ' principle. Denying the 'only  $x$  and  $y$ ' principle may be highly implausible, but there is nothing logically contradictory about it.<sup>99</sup> In short, (A) is false since there is a possible world at which not-(a) is true.

Having said this it is clear that van Inwagen will reject both the recomposition model and the miraculous-event model. This is because he holds to the immanent-causation requirement. What is required by van Inwagen, therefore, is a demonstration that (1)–(4) are logically consistent in a way that does not commit him to denying the immanent-causation requirement. This will be the concern of the next chapter.

In this chapter I have done three things. First, I have provided a defence of the immanent-causation requirement. In particular, I have argued that rejecting the immanent-causation requirement has implausible consequences for the persistence of human organisms. Second, in doing so, I have demonstrated that we should reject the recomposition model and the miraculous-event model. Third, I have argued that, even so, premise (5') of the argument from the logical problem of life after death is false and, in consequence, the argument is unsound.

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<sup>99</sup> Neither does denying the 'only  $x$  and  $y$ ' principle contradict (1)–(4).

## CHAPTER 6 – (B)

As has been demonstrated in the last chapter one can reject (A) of the logical problem of life after death but only on pain, for example, of denying the ‘only  $x$  and  $y$ ’ principle. In consequence, one may choose to reject (B) instead. (B) says: necessarily, when we die the simples that last composed us will cease to bear any immanent-causal connection to any organism. The rejection of (B) is the solution that has had the most attention from contemporary philosophers. In fact, there are two favoured ways by which one can reject (B).

In this chapter, therefore, I will put forward two more defences of the view that life after death is logically possible given animalism. That is, I will put forward two more scenarios at which (B) is false. I will then consider some responses to both of these scenarios. I will begin by considering a model (or family of models) favoured by van Inwagen.

### 6.1 Simulacrum models

In his papers ‘The Possibility of Resurrection’ (van Inwagen 1978), ‘Dualism and materialism’ (van Inwagen 1995), ‘The Possibility of Resurrection’ (with postscript) (van Inwagen 1998b) and, ‘I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come’ (van Inwagen 2015) van Inwagen argues that proposition (B) is false. Van Inwagen’s solution to this problem is to demonstrate that “‘certain facts about the present age’ are not facts’ (van Inwagen 1998b, 49); in particular, he disputes that when human organisms die their lives get disrupted and their remains undergo physical dissolution. Rather, the disruption of life upon death and physical dissolution is only, perhaps, apparent.

In ‘The Possibility of Resurrection’ van Inwagen argues just this. He does this by providing what he thinks is a metaphysically possible story in which human organisms ‘die’ but their lives do not get disrupted. In doing so, he takes himself to have established that it is possible for God to resurrect human organisms from the dead and, therefore, he takes himself to be justified in asserting that it is possible for God to resurrect human organisms from the dead and, likewise, (I take it) asserting that it is possible for an organism that has died to exist again on the Last Day.

Van Inwagen puts forward the story as follows:

It is part of the Christian faith that all men who share in the sin of Adam must die. What does it mean to say that I must die? Just this: that one day I shall be composed entirely of nonliving matter; that is, I shall be a corpse. It is not part of the Christian faith that I must at any time be totally annihilated or disintegrate. (One might note that Christ, whose story is supposed to provide the archetype for the story of each man's resurrection, became a corpse but did not, even in his human nature, cease to exist.) It is of course true that men apparently cease to exist: those who are cremated, for example. But it contradicts nothing in the creeds to suppose that this is not what really happens, and that God preserves our corpses contrary to all appearance. Perhaps at the moment of each man's death, God removes his corpse and replaces it with a simulacrum, which is what is burned or rots. Or perhaps God is not quite so wholesale as this: Perhaps he removes for 'safekeeping' only the 'core person'— the brain and central nervous system— or even some special part of it. These are the details.

I take it that this story shows that the Resurrection is a feat an almighty being could accomplish (van Inwagen 1998b, 49).

There are, in the above passage, two different stories. In the first case, van Inwagen argues that God may preserve our corpses contrary to all appearance. In the second case, God preserves 'only the 'core person' – the brain and central nervous system— or even some special part of it' (van Inwagen 1998b, 49). I shall consider each story in turn.

There are, primarily, two responses levelled at these suggestions. I will consider one more in Part III. The first response levelled at the first suggestion is that these suggestions entail some 'unseemly' conclusion (Zimmerman 2010, 33). The second response levelled at the second suggestion is that it is metaphysically incoherent.

### **6.1.1 Bodily-remains simulacrum model**

The first story says that God preserves our *corpses* contrary to all appearance. Call this 'the bodily-remains simulacrum model'. The first objection to this model says that this model entails some unseemly conclusion. Zimmerman writes,

However useful the story might be as a way to show that the appearance of complete biological death is compatible with the resurrection of these very bodies, there is a downside to supposing that the story is true. Large chunks of matter do not *seem* to disappear whenever a human being dies. If God actually used this method, He would be in the business of replacing our living bodies with dead simulacra, made of entirely new (or at least different, imported) material, at the last possible moment; and that would involve God in a sort of massive, systematic deception—roughly on the same scale as creating a ‘young earth’ but hiding fake dinosaur bones in the ground to make it look as though our planet has an ancient and interesting history (Zimmerman 2010, 33).

Put simply, the argument is that van Inwagen’s story entails some unseemly conclusion, and if we should not believe stories that have unseemly conclusions then we should not believe van Inwagen’s story. The unseemly conclusion is that according to the simulacrum story God is a systematic mass deceiver i.e., God systematically makes us all believe that it is the remains of our loved ones that we go to visit in cemeteries or scatter in scenic places.

Van Inwagen has responded to the claim that his story entails that God is a systematic mass deceiver. Van Inwagen asks ‘what is God deceiving us about?’ (cf. van Inwagen 2015, 8). Perhaps, says van Inwagen, God is not deceiving us at all but the fact that God puts something that looks like the bodily remains of our loved ones in the ground is, on God’s part, a counterfactual demonstration of ‘what would have been if he were no more than a God of justice and had left us to the situation we had earned for ourselves by our rebellion against our creator’ (van Inwagen 2015, 8). That is, God has a good reason for placing a look-alike in the ground: it shows us what would have been our fate were it not the case that Christ died for our sins.<sup>100</sup> Moreover, van Inwagen also argues that although the belief that we form when our loved ones die (namely, that our loved one’s remains are, say, in the ground) is a false belief, there is nothing unusual about this. There is nothing out of the ordinary about our forming a

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<sup>100</sup> If this is God’s plan He seems to have failed. This is sufficient reason for me to think that it is not God’s plan.

false belief under normal conditions.<sup>101</sup>

I think that this defence against the claim that God, on the bodily-remains simulacrum model, is a systematic mass deceiver is successful. This point, however, is rather tangential to this thesis. Let us assume for the sake of argument that van Inwagen is right; God does place simulacra in the ground as a counterfactual demonstration of all that is done in Christ and He does not intend that we form the false belief that we do. This may turn back the suggestion that God is a systematic mass deceiver but, apart from that, it does not make van Inwagen's position much more plausible. Whether or not God deceives or is engaging in a counterfactual demonstration of all that has been achieved in Christ, we still have very little justification for believing that what the bodily-remains simulacrum model describes is *a very real possibility*; that is, a possibility that may well be. We have very little reason for believing that God is engaged in this kind of activity. There is no evidence for this claim nor is there any scriptural warrant for this claim. The substance dualist is hardly going to be convinced that van Inwagen's model of life after death is just as plausible as his own. I will return to this point in Part III.

Moreover, one may also argue that van Inwagen's model trades on a controversial view of death; that is, in order for the bodily-remains simulacrum model to be considered to be true one needs to count suspension (as I have done thus far) as death. In Chapter 3 I outlined three different ways to understand the 'vital status' of an organism that has had its life suspended. It could be classed as alive, dead, or neither dead nor alive. Of these three options, the view that an organism that has undergone cryopreservation is 'dead' is perhaps the most controversial option. As Loose, for example, notes,

in real cases of cryogenic freezing it is usual to consider the organism to be alive despite the absence of the normal chemical and biological processes. For example, cryogenically frozen embryos or dehydrated tardigrades, are considered alive because they are viable, possessing the capacity for vitality

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<sup>101</sup> Van Inwagen uses 'optimal conditions.' It strikes me, however, that there is something strange about our forming false beliefs under truly optimal conditions.

(Loose, forthcoming).

Not only this but, as mentioned, this is van Inwagen's 'preferred' understanding of an organism that has undergone cryopreservation too. That is, he prefers to say that a cryogenically preserved organism is *alive*. I argued that van Inwagen should accept that suspension is a form of death so as to enable him to 'maximise the number of possibilities' at which an organism that has died can be brought back to life. This move now, however, seems *ad hoc*. That is, since van Inwagen himself would prefer to say that an organism that has had its life suspended is alive, it seems *ad hoc* to rescind this claim solely to secure resurrection.

For the time being it is not my aim to argue either for or against the view that an organism that has had its life suspended is dead. If one so wishes one can argue against van Inwagen by arguing that an organism that has had its life suspended is not dead. I think, however, that there are ways of arguing that animalism is inconsistent with the persistence of human organisms into the afterlife without entering into the debate over whether or not a human organism that has had its life suspended is dead, alive or neither dead nor alive.

### **6.1.2 Brain-remains simulacrum model**

That God preserves the organism in the way described above is not the only suggestion that van Inwagen gives. Van Inwagen also writes that 'perhaps God is not quite so wholesale as this: Perhaps he removes for "safe-keeping" only the "core person" –the brain and central nervous system– or even some special part of it. These are the details' (van Inwagen 1998b, 49). Moreover, later he says that this is not merely a possibility but it is his current inclination to believe that this is the case. He writes,

[m]y inclination is to believe that God will somehow –in the way I have imagined or in some way I lack the conceptual resources to imagine, "in this way or some other"—preserve a remnant of each person, a *gumnos kókkos* (a naked kernel: 1 Cor. 15:37), which will be sown in corruption and raised in incorruption (van Inwagen 1998b, 51).

This model has several advantages over the bodily-remains simulacrum model. One apparent advantage is that this model removes the charge of deception without the need to stipulate that God is engaged in an elaborate counterfactual demonstration. While our loved one's remains lie in the grave without the all-important identity bearing part of them, it is still their remains that are in the grave; not a pile of simples that are made to look like their remains.

Anders (2011), however, has suggested that this amendment to the body-simulacrum model renders van Inwagen's materialist metaphysics of the human person incoherent. In particular, Anders takes van Inwagen's suggestion that God might preserve a naked kernel of each person upon death and puts forward an explication of what he understands van Inwagen to think is the nature of this naked kernel and what he understands van Inwagen to think happens when somebody dies. He then argues that, given this explication, van Inwagen's theory is incoherent; in particular, van Inwagen is committed to the possibility of that which is logically impossible. If successful, Anders' argument is substantial. Anders' argument would entail that it is logically impossible for an organism that has died to exist again on the Last Day. I think that Anders' argument is mistaken.

I will now outline what Anders understands van Inwagen to think happens when someone dies and what Anders understands van Inwagen to mean when he says that God will preserve a naked kernel before outlining Anders' argument against van Inwagen. Having done this, in (§3) I will respond to Anders.<sup>102</sup>

Anders thinks that according to van Inwagen when someone dies the organisational structure of that person's life gets compacted. Anders calls this 'the principle of death as compaction' (Anders 2011, 34) or 'PDAC.'

**PDAC** = '[i]f a human person  $p$  dies at time  $t_1$ , then  $p$ 's life is suspended and the organizational structure of  $p$ 's life is compacted into a small portion of the simples whose activity constituted  $p$ 's life at  $t_1$ ' (Anders 2011, 34).

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<sup>102</sup> My response to Anders' argument has been published (see Atkinson (2015)). What follows in this section is largely taken from that paper.

According to Anders, upon PDAC when a human person dies that person's life gets suspended (MD2)<sup>103</sup> and the 'organizational structure' (Anders 2011, 34) of this life gets compacted. It is not entirely clear what the 'organisational structure of *p*'s life is compacted' (Anders 2011, 34) means but I will try to explain.

First, it seems to me that what must be meant by 'organizational structure of *p*'s life' is that the 'multi-grade interrelations of simples' (Anders 2011, 32) that constitute a life upon suspension remain. That is, we might say that the simples are 'organized' in a certain way in virtue of these remaining relations. Second, upon compaction, these multi-grade<sup>104</sup> interrelations remain applied to a small portion of simples. That is, while the organism was alive it was composed by a relatively large number of simples related to one another in a certain way, when the organism dies and gets compacted it comes to be composed by a small portion of those simples.

These simples compose, according to Anders' description of van Inwagen's metaphysics, the naked kernel. More specifically, we might define Anders' kernel as follows:

**Anders' Kernel** =<sub>def.</sub> *y* is a kernel iff *y* is (i) a small portion of the simples (i.i) that composed the relevant portion of a person's brain (i.ii) whose activity constitutes the (i.ii.i) suspended and (i.ii.ii) compacted life of that organism.

(i), (i.ii), (i.ii.i), and (i.ii.ii) are supported by PDAC. (i.i) follows from the fact the persistence of a human person requires not just a portion of simples but a portion of simples the activity of which 'virtually compose a brain, or the relevant portion thereof' (Anders 2011, 31).<sup>105</sup> It must be clarified, however, that this relevant portion could consist of any of the following: the brain, some relevant portion of the brain, or a portion of simples that is larger than the brain but includes the brain. It is not made clear by Anders what, precisely, this relevant portion is. It seems, however, that, so long as this portion of the organism is composed of fewer simples than the organism

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<sup>103</sup> To remind you (MD2) Suspension = *O*'s life has been suspended at *t* if the life, *L*, in virtue of which the simples that composed *O* has ceased and the simples that were caught up in *L* retain—owing to the mere absence of disruptive forces—their individual properties and their relations to one another (See p. 34).

<sup>104</sup> A multigrade relation is a relation that fails to be unigrade. A unigrade relation is a relation that has a definite degree or adicity (see McBride (2016)).

<sup>105</sup> This follows from PPI<sub>Ho</sub>.

was composed of at the time of that organism's death and more than one simple, we can refer to this portion as the 'relevant portion'.

Two points of clarification regarding (i.ii.i) and (i.ii.ii) must also be made here. First, upon PDAC one may wonder whether or not a life exists. I think that Anders would agree that, while a life 'has ceased' (van Inwagen 1990, 147) there is a sense in which there is still a life '*there*' (van Inwagen 1990, 147). This life, however, is a life in suspended form and, thus, 'not a life in the strict sense established by van Inwagen's "*Life*" principle' (Anders 2011, 35).

Second, Anders uses the term 'compaction' (i.ii.ii) in three ways. First, Anders talks about 'Dave's compacted life' (Anders 2011, 35) i.e. he refers to a life being compacted. Second, however, as previously noted, Anders says that it is not the life that gets compacted but the organisational structure of a life that gets compacted. Third, Anders refers to the fact that persons (and not lives or the organisational structure of lives) get compacted. He writes, for instance, 'Steve gets compacted' (Anders 2011, 34). It is not entirely clear, then, that (i.ii.ii) is correct since it refers to a 'compacted life' and not the compacted organisational structure of a life or the compaction of a person.

While this is unclear, I think we should go with what seems to be the most consistent use of the term 'compaction'; the compaction of the 'organisational structure' of one's life as described above. In consequence, when Anders writes that 'Steve gets compacted', I take him to mean that the various multi-grade relations between simples that compose the relevant portion of Steve the moment before Steve's death retain their various multi-grade relations. Likewise, when Anders refers to 'Dave's compacted life' I take him to mean that the life in virtue of which Dave exists before Dave's death comes to be constituted by the activity of a small portion of the simples that composed Dave before his death that retain their relevant multi-grade interrelations.

After attempting to demonstrate how PDAC is an intended feature of van Inwagen's metaphysics and describing a kernel, Anders develops a thought experiment that, he argues, is consistent with van Inwagen's metaphysics. From this thought experiment Anders runs an argument against van Inwagen. I will describe Anders' thought experiment before putting his argument into premises.

Anders writes, ‘[c]onsider a secretive young man named Dave with an ill-fated enthusiasm for explosives. One day while alone on vacation Dave blows himself to bits in the middle of the Mohave Desert’ (Anders 34, 2011). Following this explosion Anders suggests that it is consistent with van Inwagen’s metaphysics that person  $p_1$  (Dave) alive at time  $t_1$  has died at time  $t_2$  in virtue of the explosion. However, according to PDAC, death results in  $p_1$ ’s life being suspended and the organisational structure of  $p_1$ ’s life being compacted into a kernel of simples,  $k$ , therefore avoiding disruption. At time  $t_3$ , however, another person,  $p_2$  (Steve), consumes  $k$ . This results in  $k$ ’s being caught up in  $p_2$ ’s life. Sometime later, time  $t_4$ , while still carrying  $k$ ,  $p_2$  also dies. Likewise, according to PDAC,  $p_2$ ’s life also gets suspended and the organizational structure of  $p_2$ ’s life gets compacted. Specifically, on this occasion, according to Anders, the organizational structure of  $p_2$ ’s life gets compacted into the same pellet of simples that is  $k$ .<sup>106</sup> Given that this thought experiment is, apparently, consistent with van Inwagen’s metaphysics Anders runs the following argument:

- (1c) It is logically impossible for two persons to come to have all their constituents in common at one and the same time.
- (2c) Van Inwagen’s theory entails that it is possible<sup>107</sup> for two persons to become compacted into one kernel,  $k$ , and, in consequence, for ‘two numerically distinct persons [to] have all their constituents in common’ (Anders 2011, 37) at one and the same time.
- (3c) Any theory that entails that that which is logically impossible is, in fact, possible is necessarily false.
- (4c) From (1c) and (2c) van Inwagen’s theory entails the possibility of that which is logically impossible.

*Therefore,*

- (5c) From (3c) and (4c) van Inwagen’s theory is necessarily false.

I will now briefly assess each of the premises before offering a more in-depth analysis of Anders’ argument. Premise (1c) follows from van Inwagen’s commitment to the

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<sup>106</sup> This does not follow from, but is consistent with, what I have said above. I attempt to clarify below.

<sup>107</sup> Specifically, Anders thinks that it is ‘nomologically’ possible on van Inwagen’s view. I will avoid using this term as I do not think it does any significant work in Anders’ paper.

jealous nature of lives.<sup>108</sup> Premise (2c) is *prima facie* true in virtue of PDAC and Anders' description of a kernel. It might be pointed out that there are a number of alternative possibilities here. One of these possibilities is that God could compact one kernel  $k$  for  $p_2$  and another for  $p_1$ . This is true; God could do this and other things besides, but Anders' argument only requires that it be *possible* for two persons to become compacted into one kernel,  $k$  (see Anders 2011, 35 for a defence of this claim), not that this scenario actually occurs. Not only this, but it might be asked why one should accept that when  $p_2$  eats  $p_1$  and dies the organizational structure of  $p_2$ 's life gets compacted into the same collection of simples that is  $k$ . Why could it not be the case, for instance, that God preserves or removes for safekeeping the kernel  $k$  that is Dave, and Steve does not, therefore, consume  $k$ ?<sup>109</sup> In response Anders writes that 'God need not preserve the kernel of every human being...[and] if God does not preserve human beings necessarily, then it is possible that Dave's kernel be formed and that it remain after Dave's death. If this is possible then the scenario I have suggested is possible. What God can or might do does not render my scenario impossible' (Anders 2011, 36). For the sake of the argument at this time I shall grant that this is possible.<sup>110</sup> I understand premise (3c) to be uncontroversially true. (4c), as I have highlighted, is entailed by (1c) and (2c), and the conclusion (5c) follows from (3c) and (4c) by *modus ponens*. This sums up Anders' argument. I will now offer some responses on van Inwagen's behalf.

My responses are as follows. First, I contend that Anders' suggestion that God's preserving a kernel, at least in part, amounts to the compaction of the organisational structure of a life into a 'small portion of the simples' (Anders 2011, 34) whose activity constitutes a suspended life has no support from van Inwagen's writings. Second, I contend that a passage that might be taken as evidence for Anders' view cannot, in fact, be taken as evidence for Anders' view. Third, I contend that, even if we accept that the compaction of the organisational structure of a life into a small portion of the simples whose activity constitutes a suspended life is possible, regardless of the fact there is no passage in van Inwagen that affirms it, we still have

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<sup>108</sup> To remind you 'jealous' means that 'it cannot be that the activities of the  $x$ s constitute at one and the same time two lives' (van Inwagen 1990, 89).

<sup>109</sup> I thank an anonymous reviewer for highlighting these two issues with Anders' argument.

<sup>110</sup> It may be further noted that just because van Inwagen's position does not rule out the possibility of some state of affairs does not mean that his theory *entails* that state of affairs is possible. One may reject Anders' argument on this point alone.

reason to think that van Inwagen could argue that the story Anders tells requires him to predicate of kernels a condition that can be fulfilled only by corpses. In consequence, van Inwagen could argue that the activity of the simples that compose a kernel (as described by Anders) cannot, in fact, constitute a suspended life. Fourth, I contend that one need not employ Anders' description in order to account for God's preserving a naked kernel and, since there is another account available to van Inwagen, he need not agree with Anders' account.

With regards to my first contention the only defence I have is to state that I cannot see any section of Anders' paper that explicitly shows where, in van Inwagen's work, one can get the idea that 'God's preserving a kernel' means, at least in part, the preservation of a 'small portion of the simples' (Anders 2011, 34) whose activity constituted  $p$ 's life at  $t_1$  and, consequently, allows for the continuation of persons. I shall, then, turn to my second contention, and suggest that the passage that Anders might have in mind does not support his view.

It appears to me that Anders had a specific section of van Inwagen's 1990 book *Material Beings* in mind when he coined the term 'compaction'. I think Anders had this passage in mind because, first, this passage occurs on the two pages where van Inwagen discusses whether or not an organism could survive death and, second, it is the passage where van Inwagen discusses 'suspension', a condition of Anders' definition of a kernel (i.ii.i). I will quote the passage in full and argue that what van Inwagen means here is different to what Anders suggests in his paper if this passage is what Anders had in mind when coining the concept 'compaction.'

Van Inwagen writes that upon death person  $p$ 's life that

consisted mostly of chemical reactions and various relatively large-scale physical processes (the breaking and establishing of chemical bonds, the movement of fluids under hydraulic pressure, the transport of ions), is 'squeezed into' various small-scale physical processes (the orbiting of electrons and the exchange of photons by charged particles). Its life became the sum of those subchemical changes that underlie and constitute chemical and large-scale physical unchange (van Inwagen 1990, 147).

According to this passage, upon death the life of an organism is ‘squeezed into’ various small-scale physical processes and subchemical changes. This squeezing may be what Anders has in mind when developing compaction; that is, Anders might think that this squeezing is synonymous with the compaction of the organisational structure of the suspended life into a ‘kernel’, where this kernel is a small portion of the simples whose activity constitutes a suspended life. I think, however, that this is incorrect. This is because the squeezing that is taking place in this passage is not a squeezing of the organisational structure of the suspended life into a ‘small portion’ (Anders 2011, 34) of the *simples* that composed that person at the time of that person’s death, ‘a pellet’ as Anders says (Anders 2011, 35). Rather, squeezing, according to van Inwagen, refers to the squeezing of a life or large-scale physical processes into underlying *processes*. This distinction between simples and processes is important. There is no reason to think, from what van Inwagen writes, that the person has, in some way, shrunk in size; Steve does not get ‘compacted’ (Anders 2011, 34) if this means that Steve comes to be composed by a ‘small portion of the simples’ whose activity constituted *p*’s life at  $t_1$  (Anders 2011, 34). Rather, it seems that, according to van Inwagen, the life of an organism comes to be constituted by the activity of the simples caught up in submicroscopic ‘processes’ (van Inwagen 1990, 147) that underlay the large-scale macroscopic processes that constituted the life of the organism before death. We might say that, according to this passage, ‘compaction’ is a matter of scope and not a matter of size.

It must be noted that this is not to say that a person is merely a process. A person (according to van Inwagen) is a human organism, and human organisms are composed of simples that are the constituents of (lives). It seems to me that van Inwagen is merely arguing that the processes that the simples are constituents of at the moment of ‘compaction’ cease but the underlying small-scale submicroscopic processes continue. The person, then, is still identical with the organism that the simples compose, but the simples that compose that organism, at one time, are macroscopic processes and, at a later time, are submicroscopic processes. This change in scope, however, does not amount to the end of one life and the beginning of another life. Rather, van Inwagen allows the submicroscopic processes to suffice as the numerically same life as the life of the organism before its life processes changed from macroscopic to submicroscopic.

If Anders is offering an interpretation of the above passage (van Inwagen 1990, 147) when he discusses compaction then I hope to have shown that it is inconsistent with what van Inwagen describes. Anders thinks that, for van Inwagen, compaction amounts to God's preserving an essential, small portion of simples that composed person  $p$  at time  $t_1$ , while van Inwagen, it seems, actually thinks that compaction amounts to the squeezing of the life of a person from large-scale macroscopic processes into small-scale submicroscopic processes. These are clearly two different accounts.

Anders may respond, however, by arguing that he does mean to refer to a suspended life as a life that has been 'squeezed' into subchemical processes and 'compaction' merely refers to the possibility that the activity of a small portion of these simples might (in virtue of their retaining their multi-grade interrelations with one another) still constitute a suspended life. There is a further reason, however, to think that there is still a response open to van Inwagen. In particular, it is possible that van Inwagen could reject the claim that a suspended life (a life that has ceased but can begin again) can really exist in virtue of the activity of the simples that compose a kernel (as Anders describes) since the suspended life that exists in virtue of the activity of the simples that compose the kernel cannot begin again in the way that a suspended life that exists in virtue of the activity of the simples that compose a corpse could (the only example of a suspended life beginning again that van Inwagen gives). I shall now explain why.

Consider a cryogenically frozen corpse and a corpse that has not been cryogenically frozen. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the only condition that van Inwagen cites to differentiate between the microscopic activity of a cryogenically frozen corpse and that of a corpse that has not been cryogenically frozen (perhaps a corpse that 'has been subject to the normal, "room temperature" processes of biological decay for, say, fifteen minutes' (van Inwagen 1990, 147)) is the fact that the 'microlevel activity of a cryopreserved [corpse] is disposed to expand into its normal state at the moment sufficient energy should become available to it' (Eberl 2008, 71) while the microlevel activity of a corpse that has not been cryogenically frozen is not disposed to expand into its normal state at the moment the same amount of energy should become available to it. Since this is the case, for any corpse, that corpse exists in virtue of a suspended life if and only if the microlevel activity of that corpse is disposed to

expand into its normal state at the moment a certain amount of energy should become available to it.

The question now becomes whether Anders' description of van Inwagen's kernel is something of the kind that, like a cryogenically frozen corpse, is disposed to expand into its normal state at the moment that amount of energy should become available to it. On the face of it, one might think that van Inwagen's answer would be 'yes.' Van Inwagen states the condition for the life of an object, *y*'s, being disposed to begin again after its life has been suspended in the following passage: '[i]f a life has been suspended, it can begin again; if the requisite energy is supplied to the simples whose activity has been suspended, in a uniform, nondisruptive way, it *will* begin again. (Perhaps a gentle prod will be required; an electrical stimulus to the heart of the just-thawed cat, or something of that sort.)' (van Inwagen 1990, 147-148). We can state this condition as follows (mentioned in Part I):

**Disposition condition**= an object, *y*, is disposed to *have its suspended life begin again if the requisite energy is supplied to the simples whose activity has been suspended.*

If we understand a kernel to exemplify the relevant microlevel activity that disposes an object to expand into a life again (perhaps 'multi-grade interrelations between simples' as Anders describes), then the kernel can 'enliven a new organism that bridges the "gap" between death and new life'<sup>111</sup> (Anders 2011, 34) and, in consequence, can be said to be disposed to begin again.

It is possible, however, for van Inwagen to disagree. Van Inwagen could argue that the above disposition condition is not sufficient condition, but merely a necessary condition for an object *y*'s being disposed to have its life begin again. That is, van Inwagen could argue that an object that has had its life suspended can begin again and all that it takes for it to begin again is that a certain amount of energy (a gentle prod, an electrical stimulus to the heart muscle or something of that sort) be supplied to the

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<sup>111</sup> Anders does not tell us what the 'transfer of this naked kernel to enliven a new organism' means, precisely, but I take it to mean the following: God takes this kernel and places it among a collection of simples arranged humanwise in just the right place and supplies the kernel with sufficient energy for the suspended life to begin again such that the collection of simples arranged humanwise gets caught up in its life resulting in that collection of simples arranged humanwise becoming a human organism with the same life.

simples whose activity has been suspended. If this is the case then the life that is constituted by the activity of the simples that compose a kernel, is not disposed to begin again just on the supply of the relevant amount of energy, since a kernel has to be supplied with the requisite energy for life to begin again *only after it is placed into a pile of simples arranged humanwise* i.e. it requires a further condition. In consequence, van Inwagen could argue that the disposition condition can be fulfilled only by corpses and not by kernels (as described by Anders).

Moreover, in the light of van Inwagen's discussion of suspension in *Material Beings*, I think that it is not unreasonable to think that van Inwagen would argue that a suspended life exists only in virtue of an object that has retained its large-scale structural integrity such that the suspended life can begin again if the requisite energy is supplied to the simples whose large-scale activity has been suspended, and that no suspended life exists in virtue of a kernel that retains only small-scale structural integrity in virtue of the various multi-grade relations between the simples that compose it. He writes, for example, that upon suspension a human organism's 'life became the sum of those subchemical changes that underlie and constitute chemical and large-scale physical unchange' (van Inwagen 1990, 147). This is *contra* PDAC, which requires large-scale physical change.

This brings me to my third contention. Van Inwagen, it seems, could argue that the naked kernel that God preserves is something else, something different from Anders' suggestion. Van Inwagen could argue, for example, that the kernel is the preserved functioning brain, or preserved functioning relevant part of the brain, of a human organism. That is, perhaps at the moment of death (disruption) God removes the brain of the human organism and replaces it with a brain simulacrum. The brain simulacrum and accompanying pile of simples arranged humanwise then get placed in the grave, while the brain of that human organism is immediately hooked-up to an appropriate 'life-support system' (van Inwagen 1990, 177) that maintains the ongoing life of the organism. I cannot offer a full description here (space will not allow it) of how God might achieve this, or explain how this is, in some relevant sense, different from van Inwagen's own simulacrum model, but this is not my aim. My aim is simply to show that since there is an alternative description of what a naked kernel might be, van Inwagen need not accept Anders' account and the alleged impossibilities that come with that account.

Anders may respond, however, by arguing that there are good reasons to reject my disposition condition. Anders could argue that organisms undergoing open-heart or brain-transplant surgeries, for example, would fail to meet the disposition condition. That is, organisms on the operating table undergoing these procedures, it seems, would not be disposed to have their lives begin again only on the supply of a certain amount of energy (e.g., they also need their organs returning to them first). This is problematic because, given what I have said above, if an organism is not disposed to have its suspended life begin again, then that organism has ceased to exist and, in consequence, the pile of simples arranged humanwise on the operating table can never again compose that organism. But, it seems, we would want to say of organisms that have had their hearts (I will consider brain-transplants shortly) momentarily stopped (or even, perhaps, removed) that they have not ceased to exist.<sup>112</sup>

There are two responses available to me (and van Inwagen if he does, indeed, accept the disposition condition) one for each example (open-heart surgery and brain-transplant surgery). First, I will consider open-heart surgeries. It seems to me that van Inwagen could (and, perhaps, would) argue that the disposition condition, strictly speaking, does not apply to organisms that have had their hearts stopped for surgical purposes. This is because organisms that have had their hearts stopped (and for which, as is the case in open-heart surgery, a cardiopulmonary bypass machine has been temporarily put in place) can still be considered ‘alive’ in the usual sense of the word (i.e., the simples that compose them are still caught up in large-scale macroscopic processes) and, therefore, they have not had their lives suspended. In consequence, there is no need to argue that the human organisms without functioning hearts are disposed to have their suspended lives begin again. Van Inwagen, it seems, would agree. When writing about organisms that have had their hearts stopped, for example, he notes,

I seem to remember that when the heart stops beating, the human organism will sometimes cause its arterial walls to contract, in a valiant and pathetic attempt to cause the blood to circulate; this indicates that the cells that compose the stricken man are still caught up in a continuing homeodynamic event (van Inwagen 1990, 146).

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<sup>112</sup> I thank an anonymous reviewer for raising this point.

In other words, the fact that the human organism can cause its arterial walls to contract is evidence that the life of the human organism is still continuing, even though the heart of that organism has stopped pumping blood.

Second, consider an organism undergoing a brain-transplant. On the one hand, van Inwagen refers to the virtual object on an operating table that has had its brain removed (awaiting a new brain) as a ‘brain-complement’ (van Inwagen 1990, 173). While, on the other hand, the brain that has been removed from the brain-complement and has been hooked up to an ‘elaborate mechanism’ (van Inwagen 1990, 170) ‘is now a radically maimed man, a man who is about as maimed as it is possible for a man to be’ (van Inwagen 1990, 172). That is, the removed brain of an organism (provided it is still alive) is the organism. The ‘brain-complement’ (van Inwagen 1990, 173), then, is not disposed to have its life begin again on the supply of the requisite amount of energy, because the simples that virtually compose a brain-complement are not caught up in a life and the brain-complement, therefore, is not an organism. This, however, should not be considered problematic. Most of us, it seems to me, would agree that a human organism without a brain (or, more specifically, a brain-complement) is not disposed to have its life begin again. Moreover, the brain that has been removed from the brain-complement and has been hooked up to an elaborate machine would be, according to van Inwagen, the persisting organism and need not, itself, be disposed to have its life begin again on the supply of a certain amount of energy, since it is still (like the organism hooked up to a cardiopulmonary bypass machine) alive. Van Inwagen could argue then that his story actually supports our intuitions regarding the brain-complement; the brain-complement is not disposed to have its life begin again, and the brain hooked-up to an elaborate mechanism need not be disposed to have its life begin again.

It may be further argued, however, that another problem arises. Although the brain that has been hooked-up to an elaborate mechanism may not need to meet the disposition condition (since its life has not been suspended), it now no longer seems to meet van Inwagen’s own self-maintaining condition for lives. This is because the brain now needs some form of active external support – the elaborate mechanism – to keep it going. Van Inwagen seems to disagree. Van Inwagen writes that give a

severed head, or brain for that matter, ‘the proper environment and it will maintain itself... a life-support system for the head will be no more than an elaborate pump’ (van Inwagen 1990, 177-178). Put simply, it will still be the brain ‘doing the work’ of keeping the life going and not the elaborate machine. Likewise, we can say the same about an organism undergoing open-heart surgery. The cardiopulmonary bypass machine is no more than an elaborate pump. In both cases it is the brain that is still maintaining and directing the homeodynamic event.

Anders may, finally, respond by arguing that, if the disposition condition were true, then this would not allow van Inwagen to explain bodily resurrection after the destruction of a corpse. I will make two points in response. First, I think that it is consistent with van Inwagen’s materialist metaphysics to say that if an organism *really* gets blown to bits by a bomb (it is destroyed) its life will cease and, consequently, that organism can never exist again. Strictly speaking, then, organisms (or freshly dead corpses for that matter) cannot undergo complete destruction if they are to survive death.<sup>113</sup> Second, however, this is not a problem for van Inwagen. As stated above, van Inwagen could (and would, I think) argue that, although he does not have an explanation of the actual mechanism by which God might raise a human organism from the dead whose corpse has been destroyed, he does have a metaphysically possible description of how God might achieve the resurrection. He will argue that, although it seems to us like the organism has been blown to bits in fact, moments before that organism was blown up, God could preserve a remnant of that organism, a naked kernel ‘in the way [he has] imagined’ (van Inwagen 1998b, 51) (i.e., the simulacrum model) or in some very similar way (as mentioned above, God could, for instance, at the moment of each man’s death, remove the freshly dead corpse, functioning brain, or central nervous system for safekeeping and replace it with a look-alike).

In sum it seems that there is a plausible response that can be given on behalf of van Inwagen to Anders’ argument and, in consequence, Anders fails to demonstrate the falsity of van Inwagen’s metaphysics but, rather, demonstrates the falsity of some

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<sup>113</sup> One may object to Anders’ model on this point alone. Anders argues that when an organism gets blown to bits by a bomb its life gets suspended and compacted, but van Inwagen says that when an organism gets blown to bits by a bomb its life ceases. I thank Daniel Hill for drawing my attention to this point.

other (but similar) materialist metaphysics.<sup>114</sup> In consequence, van Inwagen's suggestion is not metaphysically incoherent and, as such, van Inwagen's suggestion demonstrates that premise (5') is false. It is possible for an organism that has died to exist again on the Last Day so long as 'death' is understood as MD2 suspension<sup>115</sup> and it is conceded that God could, at the moment of our deaths, take our corpses (or relevant part thereof) and preserve them for safekeeping.

## 6.2 Falling-elevator model

There is a final model in the literature that might aid the animalist. As mentioned above, one of the primary problems for van Inwagen's simulacrum model (or models) is that it entails the unseemly conclusion that at the moment of one's death God removes one's 'corpse and replaces it with a simulacrum, which is what is burned or rots' (van Inwagen 1998b, 49). Zimmerman (1999) puts forward another story at which proposition (B) of the problem of life after death is false, and which does not require God to replace an organism that has died with a look-alike. Zimmerman calls his model 'the falling-elevator model'<sup>116</sup> To remind you proposition (B) = necessarily, when we die the simples that last composed us will cease to bear any immanent-causal connection to any organism.

Zimmerman's solution is to argue that moments before a particular human organism's death God could allow the simples that compose that organism to *bud*. That is, the simples that compose say, organism  $O_1$ , at the time of  $O_1$ 's death,  $t_2$ , could, so Zimmerman argues, undergo 'something like fission' (Zimmerman 2010, 36). Specifically, to quote Zimmerman,

God [at death] allows each atom to continue to immanently cause later stages in the 'life' or history of an atom, right where it is located, as it normally would do; but...God *also* gives each atom the miraculous power to produce an

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<sup>114</sup> This is, of course, still valuable but it is not what Anders is professing to do.

<sup>115</sup> (MD2) Suspension =  $O$ 's life has been suspended at  $t$  if the life,  $L$ , in virtue of which the simples that composed  $O$  has ceased and the simples that were caught up in  $L$  retain—owing to the mere absence of disruptive forces—their individual properties and their relations to one another.

<sup>116</sup> It is called this for it is supposed to be reminiscent of the way in which a cartoon character survives death by falling elevator: it steps out of the way at the last possible moment.

exact duplicate at a certain distance in space or time (or both), at an unspecified location I shall call ‘the next world’ (Zimmerman 2010, 36).<sup>117</sup>

There are, in consequence, two sets of simples as a result of this budding process. One set ‘in this world’ and one set ‘in the next world’.<sup>118</sup> The set ‘in the next world’ continues to be immanent-causally related to the set that exists in this world. The simples that are members of the set ‘in the next world’ also continue to be constituents of a life. They are, in consequence, parts of an organism. Let us call this organism ‘ $O_2$ ’. The set of simples that (we might say, virtually) compose the organism that exists ‘in this world’, however, after the budding process, cease to be constituents of the life in which they were previously caught up. In this case, therefore, they do not compose anything (or, at least, they virtually compose a corpse). On this model  $O_1$  has survived its death.  $O_1$  is identical with  $O_2$  in virtue of the fact that the simples that compose  $O_1$  and the simples that compose  $O_2$  are immanent-causally connected; they are constituents of the same life processes. The simples that would compose  $O_1$ , however, are now a mere pile of simples that resemble  $O_1$ . This pile of simples is what is placed in the grave or burned. This completes the falling-elevator model.  $O_1$  and  $O_2$  are identical in virtue of the fact that the simples that compose  $O_2$  and the simples that compose  $O_1$  are constituents of the same life.

The important difference between Zimmerman’s model of the resurrection and van Inwagen’s is that, on Zimmerman’s account, we can point to the product of the budding process ‘in this world’ and say of it truly ‘there are organism  $O_1$ ’s remains’. Moreover, we could point to the organism in the next world (were this possible) and say ‘there is organism  $O_1$ ’. In this case the simples that once composed, say,  $O_1$  but now lie on the operating table or in the mortuary really are  $O_1$ ’s remains. They are not a pile of simples that God placed there to look like our remains. Zimmerman’s model, therefore, escapes the objection that faces van Inwagen’s model: that God is a systematic mass deceiver.

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<sup>117</sup> Importantly, this passage assumes that there can be immanent causation across temporal gaps. I find Zimmerman’s arguments for immanent causation across temporal gaps convincing and so will accept his most recent model as plausible.

<sup>118</sup> I understand the phrase ‘the next world’ to refer to the same time and place and the phrase ‘life of the world to come’ in the Nicene Creed.

It should also be noted that while Zimmerman's model does require one to accept a controversial metaphysical thesis (to be discussed) it does not rely upon a controversial understanding of death. The simples that compose a particular organism need not come to be constituents of a submicroscopic-life in order for that organism to persist. The simples that compose a particular organism at the time of that organism's death really do cease to be constituents of a life (in particular, constituents of any life; macroscopic or submicroscopic).

There are, however, a number of objections to the falling-elevator model. I will not discuss them all here. This is primarily because I think that one of the main arguments against the falling-elevator model is sound.<sup>119</sup> The falling-elevator model, it is argued, requires the animalist to accept a no-equally-close continuer clause in her theory of personal identity and no-equally-close continuer clauses in one's theory of personal identity are to be avoided. In this case a no-equally-close continuer clause would look something like this:  $O_1$  at  $t_1$ , is identical with  $O_2$  at  $t_2$ , if and only if,  $O_1$  and  $O_2$  share the same life processes *and there is no other equally good candidate ( $O_3$ ) for identification with  $O_2$  at  $t_2$* . For the time being I will merely rehearse this argument. I will offer a new objection to the falling-elevator model in Part III of this thesis.

The problem arises when one considers a possible alternative scenario<sup>120</sup> to the falling-elevator model. In this scenario, rather than it being the case that the simples that composed  $O_1$  divide into two sets and only one of these sets carries on  $O_1$ 's life processes, both do. Zimmerman gets us to imagine a world where many years before  $O_1$ 's death, God secretly causes  $O_1$ 's atoms to bud, 'generating duplicates in the next world in just the way the Falling Elevator Model recommends that God do at [ $O_1$ 's] death' (Zimmerman 2013, 142). However, in this scenario,  $O_1$  is not about to die. Perhaps this budding occurs when  $O_1$  is aged seven. In this case, after budding, there exist two organisms that are both candidates for identification with  $O_1$  where in the other scenario (on the falling-elevator model) there was just one. Let us say that  $O_1$  is the organism that exists at time  $t_1$  (pre-budding),  $O_2$  is the organism that exists in the next world at time  $t_3$  (post-budding) and  $O_3$  is the organism that exists in this world

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<sup>119</sup> Zimmerman (2010) responds to the other objections. These objections are Olson's 'discontinuous momentum' objection (Olson 2010), Hasker's 'necessity of identity' objection (Hasker 1999, 230–231) and Hershenov's 'assimilation principle' objection (Hershenov 2002).

<sup>120</sup> A scenario apparently consistent with the falling-elevator model.

(post-budding).<sup>121</sup> Zimmerman notes that ‘[o]n the face of it, the mere occurrence of this budding event should not have killed [ $O_1$ ]’ (Zimmerman 2013, 142).  $O_1$ , in my imagination, seems to exist as before:  $O_1$  is identical with  $O_3$  in this world but now there is a duplicate existing in the next world,  $O_2$ . On the falling-elevator model  $O_1$  is identical with  $O_2$  in virtue of the fact that  $O_2$  carries on  $O_1$ ’s life processes and  $O_1$  has died. In the second scenario just described, however,  $O_1$  is not identical with  $O_2$ . Rather,  $O_2$  is merely a duplicate of  $O_1$ .

Both of these scenarios are, it is argued, possible on van Inwagen’s metaphysics. Given the possibility of both scenarios, however, it seems that the identity of  $O_2$  depends on facts about  $O_3$ . It depends on whether or not  $O_3$  continues  $O_1$ ’s life processes. This is problematic. It is problematic because, as usually understood,  $y$ ’s identity with  $x$ , cannot depend on some other thing  $z$ . This principle, as mentioned above, is referred to as the ‘only  $x$  and  $y$ ’ principle.<sup>122</sup> To remind us, the ‘only  $x$  and  $y$ ’ principle states that when considering whether or not  $x$  is numerically identical to  $y$  (or, for our purposes,  $O_1$  is numerically identical to  $O_2$ ) the identification of  $x$  with  $y$  can only depend on facts about  $x$  and  $y$  ( $O_1$  and  $O_2$ ) and the relations between them and not about individuals other than  $x$  and  $y$  ( $O_1$  and  $O_2$ ) e.g.  $z$  (or  $O_3$ ). As Zimmerman notes, however, the falling-elevator model ‘implies that the (antecedently highly plausible) only  $x$  and  $y$  principle be false’ (Zimmerman 2009, 333). This is because when selecting the correct candidate for identification with organism  $O_1$  it is possible, on the falling-elevator model, that there are two candidates (organism  $O_2$  and organism  $O_3$ ) available for identification with organism  $O_1$ . As I have mentioned, Zimmerman thinks that if  $O_2$  does not survive (but is a pile of simples) then  $O_1$  is identical with  $O_3$ . This being the case, identification of  $O_1$  with some later organism  $O_3$  is not only dependent upon the facts between  $O_1$  and  $O_3$  but is dependent upon the survival of (and, as such, facts about)  $O_2$ .

Most find, as Zimmerman notes, the ‘only  $x$  and  $y$ ’ principle to be ‘highly plausible’ (Zimmerman 2009, 333). I suspect that many animalists accept the ‘only  $x$  and  $y$ ’ principle too and, in consequence, they may find Zimmerman’s model unattractive. Van Inwagen, for example, accepts a version of the ‘only  $x$  and  $y$ ’ principle. He

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<sup>121</sup> Where budding occurs at time  $t_2$ .

<sup>122</sup> To be clear, Zimmerman thinks that van Inwagen should reject the ‘only  $x$  and  $y$ ’ principle regardless of the fact that it is required for the falling-elevator model. I will return to this point shortly.

writes, ‘it is absurd, it is utterly incoherent, to suppose that his [an organism’s] identity could depend on what might happen to some atoms other than the atoms that compose him’ (van Inwagen 1995, 486). Van Inwagen says this in response to the duplication objection as raised by the recomposition model but it goes for budding too since van Inwagen’s statement is one about the absurdity of the identity relation between two organisms resting on some atoms other than the atoms that compose him (and not merely about the recomposition of some previous atoms that composed a particular organism). Thus, to accept the falling-elevator model van Inwagen would have to give up his commitment to the ‘only  $x$  and  $y$ ’ principle.

Zimmerman, however, argues that, like it or not, van Inwagen is committed to the falsity of the ‘only  $x$  and  $y$ ’ principle regardless of whether or not he accepts the falling-elevator model. In consequence, accepting the falling-elevator model should come (at least for van Inwagen) at no extra cost.

I will now explain why. Zimmerman gets us to imagine an organism (the imaginary organism that van Inwagen describes in *Material Beings*). This organism is called ‘Neocerberus’. Neocerberus is an organism with two brains and two organs of maintenance. Each brain ‘is the seat of reasoning, of the processing of sensory information, and of Neocerberus’ other “higher” mental functions’ (Zimmerman 2009, 334). The two organs of maintenance direct the homeodynamic activities of the organism. The brain on the left side of the organism is joined by a commissure (similar to that of the commissure between the two cerebral hemispheres in all normal human organisms) to the brain on the right side of the organism. Likewise, the organ of maintenance on the left side of the organism is joined to the organ of maintenance on the right side of the organism. Not only this but the two brains and the two organs of maintenance are ‘practically mirror images of one another’ (Zimmerman 2009, 334). Both brains and organs of maintenance send the same signals at the same time to the various parts of the organism. In this case, therefore, ‘both conscious bodily movements and unconscious regulation of homeodynamic processes are overdetermined’ (Zimmerman 2009, 334). The simples that virtually compose the brains, the organs of maintenance and other parts of Neocerberus are constituents, so says van Inwagen, of the same life. Moreover, the causes of Neocerberus’ ongoing life processes are a result of both of the functioning organs of maintenance.

Consider the following two scenarios. First, let us say that we were to split Neocerberus in two without causing either of the brains or the organs of maintenance to cease functioning. Let us say that in the process we effectively perform a commissurotomy; cutting the connection between both of the brains and both of the organs of maintenance. Second, let us say that we completely destroy half of the organism and leave only one brain and one organ of maintenance (perhaps the right-hand brain and organ of maintenance). Let us say that in both of these situations both of the brains and both of the organs of maintenance continue to function.

In the first scenario, van Inwagen holds ‘that two new organisms have come into existence, and that Neocerberus ceased to exist at the moment it became true that the simples that had composed him began to compose two organisms’ (van Inwagen 1990, 203). This is not because there now exists a competitor but because Neocerberus is the organism that had two organs of maintenance directing its life, not one; it had two different sets of causes underlying the continuation of its life processes where it now has one set. The two organisms that come into existence after the commissurotomy do so because their lives have different causes from Neocerberus’ life.<sup>123</sup> This is also the case when, say, one of Neocerberus’ organs of maintenance is destroyed. There is a remaining organism and it persists in virtue of the fact that there is a continuing life. This life, however, has different causes from the life of Neocerberus and, in consequence, so says van Inwagen, is not Neocerberus.

Zimmerman adapts the Neocerberus example. This adapted example is supposed to describe an organism that is similar to Neocerberus. Zimmerman argues that if this organism possibly exists, then van Inwagen should accept a closest continuer theory of personal identity (and, in consequence, reject the ‘only *x* and *y*’ principle).

Zimmerman describes a creature very similar to Neocerberus called ‘Leftycerberus’. The crucial difference is that

[b]oth of its organs of maintenance are more or less in synch, but the left one is a little faster than the right in sending electrical impulses to the rest of the body; and the first signal to arrive always pre-empts the slower signal,

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<sup>123</sup> See van Inwagen (1990, 208). Van Inwagen writes that the life of one of the organisms that exists as a result of cutting Neocerberus in two ‘is a new event, distinct from Neocerberus’ life because it had different causes from Neocerberus’ life’ (van Inwagen 1990, 208).

preventing it from causing changes in respiration, pulse rate, and so on. In this case, the right-hand organ of maintenance *isn't* among the causes of Leftycerberus's Life; and so according to van Inwagen's reasoning, it can be removed without bringing Leftycerberus's Life to an end (Zimmerman 2009, 335).

Zimmerman then further adapts this example. Let us say that Leftycerberus' right-hand organ is only successful fifty percent of the time. When it is not successful the other left-hand organ of maintenance takes over. Perhaps, Leftycerberus' right-hand organ has a stint at directing the Leftycerberus' life before it tires, at which point the left-hand organ has a stint at directing Leftycerberus' life. Zimmerman argues that in this situation when the left-hand organ takes over control a new life begins and the old one ceases. In this case one organism would cease to exist and a new organism would begin to exist. This is because a life would begin with 'different causes' (Zimmerman 2009, 335). Zimmerman argues that this is an unwanted result because we find it intuitive to say that Leftycerberus would continue to exist (as the same organism) even after its life processes were to suddenly become caused by a different organ. Zimmerman asks the rhetorical question '[w]hy couldn't Leftycerberus's heart rate alone, be taken over by its right organ of maintenance without the poor thing's ceasing to be?' (Zimmerman 2009, 336).

Zimmerman thinks that van Inwagen should accept that Leftycerberus possibly exists and Leftycerberus continues to exist when its right-hand organ takes over the direction of homeodynamic processes from its left-hand organ. If van Inwagen were to allow for the possibility of Leftycerberus and organ-of-maintenance-switching-without-death he would, says Zimmerman, 'have to admit that such a creature *could* survive the removal of one of its organs of maintenance' (Zimmerman 2009, 336). If it can survive one of its organs tiring and shutting down for a short while, why can it not survive that organ's removal?

This is problematic for the animalist who wants to hold the 'only *x* and *y*' principle. Were we to destroy, say, the right half of Leftycerberus (including one of its organs of maintenance) then we would be left with an organism that is identical to Leftycerberus. Were to cut Leftycerberus in two, however, then there would be two resulting organisms and each of these organisms would have equal claim to being

identical to Leftycerberus. In the first scenario the remaining (right half) organism would be Leftycerberus. In the second neither (right half or left half) organism would be Leftycerberus. It cannot be the case that the two resulting organisms are both Leftycerberus; one concrete object cannot be wholly in two places at once. In this case, the identity of Leftycerberus at one time with Leftycerberus at another time depends upon the presence or absence of a competitor (namely, the right half of Leftycerberus). This has the unwanted result of entailing that the ‘only  $x$  and  $y$ ’ principle is false. The identity of Leftycerberus at one time,  $t_1$ , with an organism at another time,  $t_2$ , depends upon facts about another individual.

What is the ramification of this for the purposes of this thesis? First, if Zimmerman’s argument is sound and one accepts the ‘only  $x$  and  $y$ ’ principle, then one should believe that animalism is false. If this is the case, then we can end the argument here. My thesis, to some extent, has been established. It is unreasonable to believe that animalism is true and that human organisms that have died can exist again on the Last Day because animalism is false.

Second, however, one may of course argue that Zimmerman’s argument is unsound. I suspect that most animalists will attempt to argue that Zimmerman’s argument is unsound. However, I have yet to find a convincing demonstration that it is unsound. Van Inwagen, for example, as of yet, has not responded to Zimmerman’s argument and has recently confirmed that, in effect, he holds to the ‘only  $x$  and  $y$ ’ principle.<sup>124</sup> I do not know what to make of this. I can only speculate. There are, so it seems to me, three main possibilities. First, perhaps van Inwagen thinks that Zimmerman’s argument is unsound but he has not yet told us why. Second, perhaps, van Inwagen thinks that Zimmerman’s argument is sound but that he would still rather provide an account of the possibility of life after death that does not commit him to the falsity of the ‘only  $x$  and  $y$ ’ principle. Perhaps he does so on the off-chance that Zimmerman’s argument turns out to be unsound. Third, perhaps he simply has not come across Zimmerman’s argument. I find this last possibility implausible.

I think it is probably the case that van Inwagen thinks that Zimmerman’s argument is unsound but has not yet told us why. I can think of one way by which van Inwagen could respond to Zimmerman’s argument. While this response is very weak and so

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<sup>124</sup> See (van Inwagen 1995, 486) quoted above.

one that I would not want to attribute to van Inwagen, I cannot see another response available. As Zimmerman notes, in order for van Inwagen's argument to be considered sound '[v]an Inwagen must allow for at least the abstract possibility of cases of organic fission which break the only  $x$  and  $y$  principle' (Zimmerman 2009, 333). That is, van Inwagen must allow for the story that Zimmerman tells about Leftycerberus accurately to describe an 'abstract possibility'. If by 'abstract possibility' Zimmerman means 'broad logical possibility', then van Inwagen will reject Zimmerman's argument. Van Inwagen is a modal sceptic (of sorts). That is, he is sceptical that one is justified when one asserts a modal proposition that is about matters that are remote from the practical business of everyday life.<sup>125</sup> Perhaps van Inwagen thinks that the proposition 'it is possible that Leftycerberus exists' is one of those propositions that is remote from the practical business of everyday life.

This, however, would be a desperate move for van Inwagen to make. This is because van Inwagen is not, it seems, sceptical about the possible existence of Neocerberus. In fact, van Inwagen writes, 'I can see no faintest hint of impossibility in the cases that I shall imagine [one of them being the possible existence of Neocerberus], and, believe me, I have looked hard for it' (van Inwagen 1990, 191). Perhaps van Inwagen will argue that he has not yet looked hard for a hint of impossibility in the Leftycerberus case and so may retain his scepticism with regards to Leftycerberus until he can 'see no hint of impossibility'. One may think that this is having one's cake and eating it; it is, but I can see no other option here for van Inwagen.

Whatever his reason for not accepting the falling-elevator model, van Inwagen gives a theory of the possibility of life after death that does not entail that the 'only  $x$  and  $y$ ' principle is false. This is reason enough for me to continue to take the suggestion that animalism is compatible with the 'only  $x$  and  $y$ ' principle seriously (or, at least, the suggestion that God can make it the case that an organism that has died can exist again on the Last Day without violating the 'only  $x$  and  $y$ ' principle). In consequence, I will continue to examine the possibility of resurrection assuming that the 'only  $x$  and  $y$ ' principle is true. In general animalists should prefer an account of the possibility of life after death that does not entail that the 'only  $x$  and  $y$ ' principle be false.

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<sup>125</sup> More on this in Part III.

So far, I hope to have demonstrated that none of the above accounts of how it is that an organism that has died can exist again on the Last Day are logically impossible; none of them entail a contradiction. The recomposition model and the falling-elevator model may entail that the highly plausible ‘only  $x$  and  $y$ ’ principle is false, but denying the ‘only  $x$  and  $y$ ’ principle does not commit one to a contradiction. Moreover, the simulacrum models may be far-fetched and trade on some dubious assumptions about the nature of death but they do not, again, seemingly entail a contradiction.

Where does this leave the argument for logical problem of life after death? Given what has been said above, the argument from the logical problem of life after death is unsound. In particular, premise (5') is false because premises (A) and (B) are false. That is, propositions (1)–(4) do not form a logically inconsistent set because it is possible that the simples that compose an organism,  $O_1$ , that has died and the simples that compose an organism,  $O_2$ , that exists on the Last Day be constituents of the same life. This can be demonstrated by appeal to, say, the falling-elevator model and the simulacrum models.

## CHAPTER 7 – PROPOSITION (2)

Thus far I have been assuming that propositions (1)–(4) are held by all animalists who believe in life after death. In general, this is assumed throughout this thesis. It must be noted, however, that there are animalists who reject (2).<sup>126</sup> I here include a short chapter about those who reject proposition (2) for the sake of logical completeness.

Proposition (2) reads as follows: (2) For any human organism  $O_1$  at time  $t_1$  and for any human organism  $O_2$  at time  $t_2$ ,  $O_1$  and  $O_2$  are identical if and only if the simples that compose  $O_1$  and the simples that compose  $O_2$  are constituents of the same life.

Some ways by which the animalist could reject (2) can be stated as follows<sup>127</sup>:

- (i) Animalists could hold that human organisms have irreducibly disjunctive persistence conditions.
- (ii) Animalists could hold that an alternative criterion for persistence is true (a criterion that contradicts *Life*).
- (iii) Animalists could hold that anticriterialism is true.

First, (i), one could argue that human organisms have irreducibly disjunctive persistence conditions. An irreducibly disjunctive criterion for the persistence of human organisms would have the following schema:

### **Irreducibly disjunctive criterion schema:**

Necessarily, for any organism,  $O_1$ , at time  $t_1$ , and any organism,  $O_2$ , at time  $t_2$ ,  $O_1$  and  $O_2$  are identical if and only if either (x)..., or (y)..., or (z)..., or (n)....

One could, for example, hold that either (x) the simples that compose  $O_1$  and the simples that compose  $O_2$  are constituents of the same life, or (y) the simples that compose  $O_1$  and the simples that compose  $O_2$  are identical and stand in the same spatial and chemical relations. Proponents of the recomposition model may take this route. They may argue that *Life* is true until the moment of death. If this is the case

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<sup>126</sup> As mentioned this thesis is primarily aimed at those who are of a van Inwagenian stripe and van Inwagen seems to employ criteria of identity that rules out the possibility of life after death.

<sup>127</sup> I cannot consider them all. I do not have space. To consider, for example, all of the apparently possible combinations of irreducibly disjunctive persistence conditions would, I hazard, take a very long time.

one can accept an organicist animalist criterion for the persistence of human organisms (like *Life*) but argue that another one is needed for the survival of death.<sup>128</sup>

There is nothing wrong with irreducibly disjunctive persistence conditions in and of themselves. They do not, for example, necessarily entail that some highly plausible principle is false or entail a contradiction. The problem is, as Olson notes, that they ‘don’t carve nature at the joints. They are artificial, gathering up disparate phenomena to suit our interests’ (Olson 2013, 92). Concerning the problem of life after death, for example, one may only appeal to an irreducibly disjunctive criterion for our persistence in order adequately to account for our interest in the possibility of the survival of death. The worry is that this is *ad hoc*; it is not by virtue of our study of what we are that we have discovered that the persistence conditions of human organisms are disjunctive, but, rather we have decided that their persistence conditions must be disjunctive in order to account for a certain anomaly; namely, in this case, the survival of death.

Moreover, if one antecedently believes that the correct way to understand the persistence conditions of organisms is through the study of biology (as many animalists do), then letting certain problem cases (e.g., about life after death) guide us in our discerning what our persistence conditions are will appear to be a suspect method. Olson notes that ‘*Organism*...is a natural-kind concept if anything is. That there is a science devoted to the study of organisms as such is no mere reflection of contingent human interests. *Organism* could hardly be an irreducibly disjunctive concept’ (Olson 2013, 92). That is, since we seem very well to understand the kind to which we belong and since it is biology that gives us knowledge about the particular kind to which we belong, we should let biology supply us with the persistence conditions of human organisms: we should not let any other disciplines or considerations inform our criterion for personal identity.

Second, (ii), the animalist could accept that we are human organisms but accept an alternative account of personal identity across time; one that conflicts with *Life*. There are a number of alternative accounts that she could accept. I will briefly consider two of them.

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<sup>128</sup> Relatedly, Olson (2013) considers irreducible disjunctive persistence conditions as a solution to the ‘corpse problem’ and finds them wanting for reasons discussed below.

First, she could argue that while we are animals, animals need not be material or while we are animals, animals could have an immaterial part. This being the case the animalist could accept one of a number of other persistence conditions. If, for example, we are animals and animals are a compound of matter and form, then the animalist can accept a hylomorphic account of our persistence conditions. Whatever a hylomorphic account of our persistence conditions may be it will not be *Life*. A hylomorphic account would have to mention something about forms; *Life* does not. As I have mentioned the suggestion that we are animals and that animals are in part immaterial is not obviously ruled out by animalism. I should say, however, that the arguments in this thesis are targeted not merely at animalism (i.e., in its most basic form) but at materialist versions of animalism. In consequence, I shall accept that this is a legitimate response to the problem of life after death and move on.

Second, the animalist could argue that we are human organisms but that we have psychological persistence conditions. When a surgeon moves your brain from your head and places it into another head, you go with your brain not because your brain is the 'organ of maintenance' but because all of the relevant psychological capacities go with your brain. Besides the problems already mentioned with the psychological continuity account of our persistence (that you seem to persist when you enter a permanent vegetative state) the view also implies the falsity of several animalist theses that have been assumed in this thesis so far. For example, the psychological account implies that while we are human organisms we are not human organisms essentially. A cerebrum that has been cut away from an organism, so van Inwagen (for example) might argue, is a hunk of matter not an organism. If one accepts a psychological account, however, it seems possible that one could become a non-organism (a cerebrum).

Before I leave psychological accounts I should mention one further problem.

Someone who accepts a psychological account may argue that all God needs to do to make it the case that you, for example, exist again on the Last Day after you have died, is to make it the case that there is some human organism existing on the Last Day whose mental properties are in some way identical to yours now. In this case it does not matter if you have been subject to the processes of decay or have had your remains eaten by birds. God need not use the parts from which you were composed at

any time in your life to bring you back from the dead. All he needs to do is create someone psychologically just like you.

The central problem with this view is that on it, as Olson points out, ‘there would be no real psychological continuity here’ (Olson 2010, 56). Your psychological duplicate that exists on the Last Day would indeed have, say, memories that were very similar to yours but they would not be your memories. The psychological duplicate’s memories would have been given to it by God not by, say, the psychological duplicate’s having lived through the experiences that you had while you were alive.

To get around this objection an adherent to the psychological view could respond by arguing that the organism that exists on the Last Day could be psychologically identical to you because the organism that exists on the Last Day is immanent-causally connected with you. Perhaps the simples that compose the body with which you are intimately related moments before your death immanently cause another identical set of simples to appear in the future; on the Last Day. Let us also say that this organism is psychologically identical to you. In this case, even though here is a temporal gap between you and the organism that exists on the Last Day, there are grounds for arguing that this future organism really is *you*. It has all of your memories but they are not memories put there by God to resemble your memories, rather, they are there by virtue of some previously existing organism’s causing them to be there.

Whether or not this account is plausible it does not advance the debate much further. The organism with which you are identical on the Last Day still needs to be immanent-causally connected to you at the moment of your death. As has already been demonstrated, this leads to a number of other problems.

Finally, (iii), the animalist may reject (2) by arguing that while we are human organisms there are no informative sufficient conditions for the survival of human organisms. This view is otherwise known as ‘anticriterialism’. Trenton Merricks (1998; 2001) is an animalist who holds that there are no informative sufficient conditions for the persistence of human organisms across time. Moreover, Merricks believes that a human organism that has died can exist again on the Last Day. Anticriterialism is supposed to help because, as van Inwagen notes,

[t]he real philosophical problem facing the doctrine of resurrection does not seem to me to be that there is no criterion that the men of the new age could apply to determine whether someone then alive was the same man as some man who had died before the Last Day; the problem seems to me to be that there is such a criterion and (given certain facts about the present age) it would, of necessity, yield the result that many men who have died our own lifetime and earlier will not be found among those who live after the Last Day (van Inwagen 1978, 116).

Denying that there is a criterion for the survival of human organism, therefore, removes the challenge posed by the doctrine of the resurrection: there is no criterion that, of necessity, yields the result that many men who have died our own lifetime and earlier will not be found among those who live after the Last Day.

There are two responses to the anticriterialist. First, as Olson notes, even anticriterialists accept that ‘you need immanent-causal connections to persist. No one denies that *any* condition is necessary for us to persist, apart from our persistence itself. Anticriterialists merely deny that any nontrivial set of conditions is both necessary and jointly sufficient’ (Olson 2010, 58). Given that this is the case it is not clear that an appeal to anticriterialism helps in here. That is, given that when we die it certainly seems that our remains will undergo physical dissolution and given that it is (plausibly) a necessary condition for our persistence that the simples that compose us at one time are immanent-causally connected to the simples that compose us at another time, then the anticriterialist still needs to give us (at least) a broadly logically possible story at which an organism that has died can exist again on the Last Day. I agree with Stephen Davis when he writes,

[s]urely the same intuition that led the critic to propose [say] material continuity [or, in our case, material and causal continuity] as a criterion of personal identity will still be there and needs to be answered. So I don’t see how we are any better off than we were before (Davis 2001, 234).

Second, one may argue that anticriterialism is absurd.<sup>129</sup> The argument can be stated as follows: anticriterialists are committed to there being no informative sufficient

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<sup>129</sup> See Duncan (2014).

conditions for personal identity across time. If this is true then there could exist an organism  $O_2$  at a time  $t_2$  that has all of the qualitative connections with  $O_1$  at  $t_1$  (i.e., has the same memories as, the same life as, the same conscious stream as, etc.,  $O_1$  at time  $t_1$ ) but  $O_1$  is not, in fact, the same organism as  $O_2$ . This result seems absurd<sup>130</sup> and, in consequence, anticriterialism, one may argue, is false. It is absurd because, as Matthew Duncan notes, '[i]t's absurd to think that someone—or a series of someones—could be just like a normal persisting person in every single qualitative way and yet not be a persisting person' (Duncan 2014, 290). Take, for example, your reading this PhD thesis. According to anticriterialism you may fail to finish reading this PhD thesis and this is not because you get bored or can think of something better to do but because you will simply, for no reason, fail to persist. This, I take it, is absurd.

This brings Part II to a close. In summary, I have distinguished between two arguments: the argument from the problem of life after death and the argument from the logical problem of life after death. I have demonstrated that most of the arguments presented in the literature thus far have been concerned with the second problem: the logical problem of life after death. I have demonstrated that the argument from the logical problem of life after death is unsound. In particular, there are three ways by which one can respond to the logical problem of life after death. One can reject either (A), (B), or both. One can reject (A) by arguing that it is not necessarily the case that the life of an organism,  $O_1$ , at one time,  $t_1$ , is identical to the life of an organism,  $O_2$ , at another time,  $t_2$ , if and only if, the simples that compose  $O_1$  and the simples that compose  $O_2$  are immanent-causally connected. One can reject (B) by arguing that it is not necessarily the case that when we die the simples that last composed us will cease to bear any immanent-causal connection to any organism. That is, one can argue that there are possible worlds at which not-(a) and not-(b) are true. While these worlds may be wildly implausible (no one believes that it is at all likely that God will replace us at the moment of our deaths with simulacrum and very few philosophers are prepared to accept that the 'only  $x$  and  $y$ ' principle is false), they do turn back the argument from the logical problem of life after death. This, I have argued, has been

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<sup>130</sup> Daniel Hill points out that 'if this is absurd then the view of Jonathan Edwards is also absurd'. For the sake of argument, I will accept that the view of Jonathan Edwards is absurd. Or, at least, van Inwagen and other animalists of his stripe will likely find Jonathan Edwards' view absurd.

achieved. Finally, I argued that the animalist could reject (2) of the argument from the problem of life after death and the argument from the logical problem of life after death. I argued that there were a number of problems with rejecting (2). I think that the most plausible way to reject (2) is to argue that anticriterialism is true. I gave a reason for thinking that anticriterialism is false; that it is absurd. I also gave a reason for thinking that even if anticriterialism is true, it is not clear that it helps the debate since immanent-causal relations between organisms are required whatever account of personal identity one adopts.

## PART III – POSSIBILITY

Given that the debate thus far has concerned the *possibility* of life after death it is surprising to note that very little effort has been spent considering the implications of modal epistemology for the debate. Rather, most of the debate has consisted of various philosophers putting forward various just-so stories to describe just how it is that God might make it the case that an organism that has died can exist again on the Last Day. I, however, think the time has come to take a look at the debate from the fresh perspective of modal epistemology. This section is devoted to doing just this. In particular, first, I begin by demonstrating that van Inwagen's own modal scepticism is inconsistent with his solution to the logical problem of life after death (8.1). Second, I argue that if one does not accept van Inwagen's modal scepticism there is a more modest version of modal scepticism available (8.2). This version of modal scepticism, if true, also entails that one should be sceptical about whether one can justifiably assert that it is possible for God to raise human organisms from the dead. Third (Chapter 9), I demonstrate that even if one is not a modal sceptic of any sort one can argue that, while van Inwagen has an adequate solution to the argument from the logical problem of life after death, the more general argument from the problem of life after death remains unaddressed. That is, even if one is liberal about what one accepts is possible, necessary and contingent one still may worry that it is *not reasonable to believe* that it is possible for God to raise an organism from the dead, given animalism. In fact, I argue that this is what the current debate should have concerned all along. I then provide reasons why it is this more general problem that requires a response. Fourth (10), I consider some possible solutions to the problem of life after death. Finally (Chapter 11), I provide some closing remarks. I summarize where the argument stands and what needs to happen next.

## CHAPTER 8 – MODAL SCEPTICISM

In this chapter I outline van Inwagen’s modal scepticism and demonstrate that his solution to the problem of life after death is inconsistent with his modal scepticism. I then state a problem with van Inwagen’s modal scepticism. After this I outline a more modest version of modal scepticism that, if true, also entails that one should be sceptical about whether van Inwagen is justified in asserting that it is possible for God to raise human organisms from the dead.

### **8.1 Van Inwagenian modal scepticism and the possibility of life after death**

We have seen that van Inwagen’s solution to the logical life-after-death problem is to demonstrate that while *Life* is true “‘certain facts about the present age’ are not facts’ (van Inwagen 1998b, 49); in particular, the supposed fact that when human organisms die their lives get disrupted and their remains are subject to physical dissolution. Rather, the disruption of life upon death and physical dissolution is only, perhaps, apparent. In his paper ‘The Possibility of Resurrection’ van Inwagen argues just this. He does this by providing what he thinks is a metaphysically possible story in which human organisms ‘die’ but their lives do not get disrupted. In doing so, he takes himself to have established a possibility (namely, that it is possible for God to resurrect human organisms from the dead) and, therefore, takes himself to be justified in asserting that it is possible for God to resurrect human organisms from the dead.<sup>131</sup>

I will briefly outline what I take metaphysically possible stories, in general, to be and how they might function in arguments to justify some subject *S*’s assertion that some proposition *p* is possible and, therefore, enable *S* to say that she has ‘established a possibility’. I will then outline van Inwagen’s modal scepticism and demonstrate that it is incompatible with his method of telling a just-so story to defend the possibility of God’s raising a human organism from the dead.

A metaphysically possible story is a story that, since it is conceivable, serves to justify the assertion of the possibility of a certain proposition that is entailed by that story. A story of this kind can be offered in what I call an ‘argument from conceivability to possibility’ or a ‘conceivability argument’. Take, for example, the proposition: flying

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<sup>131</sup> What follows in this section (8.1) has largely been taken from (Atkinson 2016).

pigs exist, and the following story and the accompanying conceivability argument. Imagine that one day Alice successfully breeds a pig with a large bird. The offspring produced by this breeding process results in the existence of a pig with wings. This pig takes a running jump off a cliff, flaps its wings and flies. One may then argue that if this story is conceivable for one then it follows that one is *prima facie* justified in asserting the possible truth of the proposition that flying pigs exist. That is, in asserting that it is possible that flying pigs exist.

One way the structure of a conceivability argument (such as the above argument) can be represented is as follows:

### **Conceivability argument structure**

- (P1) For any proposition,  $p$ ,  $S$  is *prima facie* justified in asserting the possible truth of  $p$  if  $S$  takes herself to have conceived of a world  $w$  that verifies  $p$ .<sup>132</sup>
- (P2)  $S$  takes herself to have conceived of a world  $w$  that  $S$  takes to verify  $p$ .

*Therefore,*

- (C)  $S$  is *prima facie* justified in asserting the possible truth of  $p$ .

(P1) is the key premise. This premise assumes a particular account of the basis of modal knowledge. That is, it assumes a particular account of what it takes for some subject  $S$  to be *prima facie* justified in asserting that a particular proposition  $p$  is possibly true. According to (P1),  $S$  is justified in asserting that a particular proposition  $p$  is possibly true if  $S$  takes herself to have conceived of a world  $w$  that  $S$  takes to verify  $p$ . The account of what it takes for some subject  $S$  to be justified in asserting the possible truth of a particular proposition  $p$  that I assume in this paper (and is assumed in P1) is Stephen Yablo's account of the basis of modal knowledge (Yablo 1993). It will become clear why I assume this account shortly. According to Yablo's account, a proposition  $p$  is conceivable for  $S$  if  $S$  can imagine a possible world  $w$  that  $S$  takes to verify  $p$ . I will call this 'Yablo-style conceivability'.

The metaphysically possible world  $w$  that  $S$  takes to verify  $p$  is referred to in (P2) and, given (P1,) so long as this world  $w$  is Yablo-style conceivable for  $S$ , it follows that  $S$

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<sup>132</sup> I explain the technical term 'verify' in more detail below (p.126). Put briefly here if  $S$  takes  $w$  to verify  $p$ ,  $S$  takes  $w$  to be good evidence that  $p$ .

is justified in asserting the possible truth that  $p$ . (C) follows from (P1) and (P2). I will refer to some subject's asserting the possible truth of some proposition  $p$  as a 'possibility-claim'. In consequence, I will prefix ' $p$ ' with 'possibility-claim' when I mean to denote the possible truth of some proposition. For example, when one takes oneself to have imagined a world at which the following proposition  $p_1$  'Flying pigs exist' is verified, I shall say that one is justified in asserting the possibility-claim  $p_1$  (i.e., justified in asserting that it is possible that flying pigs exist).

In his paper 'The Possibility of Resurrection', van Inwagen seems to be putting forward a conceivability argument (of the kind above). Van Inwagen describes a metaphysically possible story (that I will refer to as  $w'$ )<sup>133</sup> that he takes to verify the proposition (that I will refer to as  $p'$ ): God resurrects human organisms. Not only this, but van Inwagen hopes that his readers will grant that it is a metaphysically possible story (cf. van Inwagen 1998c, 50). Accordingly, he hopes to have demonstrated that he (and anyone else that can imagine the story he tells) is justified in asserting the possible truth of  $p'$  and so will accept that he has established the possible truth of  $p'$ .

The metaphysically possible world that van Inwagen puts forward to verify  $p'$  has come to be known as the 'simulacrum story'. To avoid misstating the metaphysically possible world  $w'$  that van Inwagen takes to verify  $p'$  and to refresh your memory I quote the passage in full.

It is part of the Christian faith that all men who share in the sin of Adam must die. What does it mean to say that I must die? Just this: that one day I shall be composed entirely of nonliving matter; that is, I shall be a corpse. It is not part of the Christian faith that I must at any time be totally annihilated or disintegrate. (One might note that Christ, whose story is supposed to provide the archetype for the story of each man's resurrection, became a corpse but did not, even in his human nature, cease to exist.) It is of course true that men apparently cease to exist: those who are cremated, for example. But it contradicts nothing in the creeds to suppose that this is not what really happens, and that God preserves our corpses contrary to all appearance. Perhaps at the moment of each man's death, God removes his corpse and

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<sup>133</sup> As mentioned in footnote 74, I use the terms, 'story', 'scenario', 'model' and 'world' interchangeably.

replaces it with a simulacrum, which is what is burned or rots. Or perhaps God is not quite so wholesale as this: Perhaps he removes for ‘safekeeping’ only the ‘core person’ – the brain and central nervous system—or even some special part of it. These are the details.

I take it that this story shows that the Resurrection is a feat an almighty being could accomplish (van Inwagen 1998b, 49).<sup>134</sup>

We can, then, take the possible world described in the above story and put it into a conceivability argument for the possibility of the resurrection.

### **The conceivability argument for the possibility of resurrection of material beings**

(P1') For any proposition,  $p$ ,  $S$  is *prima facie* justified in asserting the possible truth of  $p$  if  $S$  takes herself to have conceived of a world that verifies  $p$ .

(P2') Van Inwagen takes himself to have conceived of a world  $w'$  (the simulacrum story) that he takes to verify  $p'$  (God resurrects human organisms).

*Therefore,*

(C') Van Inwagen is justified in asserting the possible truth of  $p'$  (i.e., it is possible for God to resurrect human organisms).

### **Modal scepticism**

Van Inwagen, however, is a sceptic about modal claims. These are propositions that include modal operators like ‘it is possible’ that and ‘it is necessary that’. For the purposes of this paper I am only concerned with possibility-claims. Van Inwagen, however, is sceptical about only some, not all, possibility-claims. Van Inwagen thinks that we should not be sceptical about possibility-claims asserted by philosophers regarding ‘ordinary propositions about everyday matters’ (van Inwagen 1998a, 76). Claims like the claim that it is possible that the table have been two feet to the left of where it in fact was are examples of possibility-claims about everyday matters. He thinks we need not be sceptical of these claims because, so it seems, these claims are not ‘remote from the practical business of everyday life’ (van Inwagen 1998a, 70),

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<sup>134</sup> There are, perhaps, two metaphysically possible stories here. (i) God preserves a whole corpse and (ii) God preserves a part of a corpse. This distinction is important but it should not matter for this chapter. In this chapter I will assume (i) but my arguments can apply to (ii). To find out more about (ii) one should see (Atkinson 2015; Anders 2011).

our knowledge of them is ‘non-inferential,’ (van Inwagen 1998a, 70) and, they express ‘no intrinsic impossibility’ (van Inwagen 1998a, 70). These claims, then, can be taken to be ‘basic’ (van Inwagen 1998a, 73) and, therefore, *prima facie* justified.<sup>135</sup> I will call the set of propositions that has as its members basic possibility-claims ‘BP.’

Van Inwagen doubts, however, that philosophers are also *prima facie* justified in asserting possibility-claims that are far-removed from the practical business of everyday life. Claims remote from the practical business of everyday life include such claims as the claim that it is possible for naturally purple cows to exist. I will call the set of propositions that has as its members possibility-claims that are far-removed from the practical business of everyday life ‘FP’.<sup>136</sup> Van Inwagen thinks that we should be sceptical of claims like these because he thinks that ‘we have no sort of capacity that would enable us to know’ them (van Inwagen 1998a, 70). Or, to put it another way, there is no adequate ‘source’ (van Inwagen 1998a, 73) (or, perhaps, combination of sources) that would enable us to know these exotic possibility-claims.

That said, van Inwagen does, however, think that there is an account of the source of modal knowledge that he says ‘has some very attractive features, and is certainly more sophisticated than any other account of modal knowledge’ (van Inwagen 1998a, 76). Moreover, he writes of it that ‘I am inclined to think that if this account is not the whole truth of the matter, it contains a great deal of the truth of the matter’ (van Inwagen 1998a, 81). This account is Yablo’s account and, importantly, (as demonstrated above) it is an account that he seems to be assuming in his argument for the possibility of resurrection. Even so, however, van Inwagen still thinks that Yablo’s account supports modal scepticism. This is because van Inwagen doubts that many of the possible worlds that philosophers have imagined, and which they take to verify exotic propositions, have been adequately imagined.

Given that van Inwagen seems to be assuming something like Yablo’s account of modal knowledge when putting forward his argument for the possibility of

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<sup>135</sup> It should be noted that van Inwagen does not discuss the justificatory status of basic modal claims as I have done. He merely argues that we *know* these claims non-inferentially. This should not matter for my purposes, however, because I assume that for *S* to know *p* entails that *S* is justified in believing *p*.

<sup>136</sup> I borrow this terminology from (Hawke 2011).

resurrection,<sup>137</sup> we can now ask a crucial question; has the world  $w'$  been adequately imagined so as to verify  $p$ ? There are two initial responses that can be given. First, if  $w'$  has been adequately imagined then  $w'$  can feature as a world that can be referred to in a conceivability argument verifying  $p'$  and, van Inwagen, is, consequently, justified in asserting the possibility-claim  $p'$ . Second, if  $w'$  has not been adequately imagined then  $w'$  cannot feature as a world that can be referred to in a conceivability argument verifying  $p'$  and, van Inwagen, is, consequently, not justified in asserting the possibility-claim  $p'$ . I will argue that, given van Inwagen's arguments for his version of modal scepticism,  $w'$  has not been adequately imagined and, consequently, the possibility-claim  $p'$  is among FP.<sup>138</sup> Before I attempt to demonstrate that  $w'$  has not been adequately imagined (given his modal scepticism), however, I must first state the conditions under which van Inwagen thinks some world  $w$  has not been adequately imagined.<sup>139</sup>

In his paper 'Modal Epistemology' van Inwagen, it seems, gives two arguments why one should hold that a particular world  $w$  has not been adequately imagined. I will call these arguments 'the structural-detail argument' and 'the compatibility with not- $p$  argument'. Let us consider each argument in turn.

### **The structural-detail argument**

First, van Inwagen argues that we have not adequately imagined a world  $w$  if our imaginings have not 'take[n] place at a level of structural detail' (van Inwagen 1998a, 80). Van Inwagen considers two propositions and two imagined worlds that

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<sup>137</sup> Below (§4) I will consider objections that argue that even though the possibility-claim  $p'$  seems to be among FP it can either: (a) be counted among BP or (b) it is among FP but can be known by testimony. There is a third option: (c) it is among FP but can be arrived at by 'reason—operating on a combination of "basic" modal knowledge...and facts about the way the world is put together' (van Inwagen 1998a, 70). But I will not consider this objection here. This is because arguing for (c) would require a significant amount of work. This is beyond the bounds of this chapter.

<sup>138</sup> Since writing this paper I have discovered that Trent Dougherty also thinks that van Inwagen's modal scepticism may undermine his (van Inwagen's) argument for the possibility of the resurrection (see (Dougherty 2006)). I hope to have demonstrated not merely that it may undermine his argument for the possibility of the resurrection, but that it does.

<sup>139</sup> As Hartl notes, van Inwagen does not give 'a clear example of a successful justificatory process *via* Yablo-style conceivability' (Hartl 2016, 275). Van Inwagen only tells us, and gives examples, of unsuccessful justificatory processes *via* Yablo-style conceivability. That is, he only gives examples of worlds that do not count as worlds that have been adequately imagined. I must proceed then in the way just described. That is, I cannot say what it takes for some world to have been adequately imagined. I can say only what it takes for some world not to have been adequately imagined. This, I think, will suffice for my purposes.

supposedly verify these propositions and demonstrates that these worlds have not been imagined at a level of structural detail sufficient to verify those propositions.

First, van Inwagen considers the proposition that naturally purple cows exist. Van Inwagen argues that in order to conceive of a world that verifies this proposition we would need to imagine ‘a chemically possible purple pigment such that the coding for the structures that would be responsible for its production and its proper placement in a cow’s coat could be coherently inserted into any DNA that was really cow DNA—or even—“cow-like-thing-but-for-color” DNA’ (van Inwagen 1998a, 78). Van Inwagen, however, is doubtful that anyone has, or can, given our present knowledge, perform this imaginative exercise and, in consequence, concludes that, ‘if a philosopher has not attempted to do something like this, then that philosopher has not, in any useful sense, attempted to imagine a possible world in which there are naturally purple cows’ (van Inwagen 1998a, 78). Consequently, van Inwagen concludes that if Yablo-style conceivability is true, and if he is right that in the present state of knowledge no one is able to imagine a possible world in which there are naturally purple cows, then it follows that ‘no one is even *prima facie* justified in believing that naturally purple cows are possible’ (van Inwagen 1998a, 78).

Second, van Inwagen considers the proposition that transparent iron exists. As with the purple-cow case, van Inwagen thinks that the world that the imaginer might take to verify this proposition has not been imagined to a sufficient level of structural detail. In order to conceive of the existence of transparent iron to a sufficient level of structural detail, van Inwagen suggests one would have to imagine a world that contains transparent iron with the ‘structural detail comparable to that of the imaginings of condensed-matter physicists who are trying to explain, say, the phenomenon of superconductivity’ (van Inwagen 1998a, 79). Again, van Inwagen argues that ‘so far as I know no one has imagined, at the necessary level of structural detail, a world—whether its laws are the actual laws or some others—in which there is transparent iron’ (van Inwagen 1998a, 79). Again, in conclusion, van Inwagen will argue that, given that no one is, in the current state of our knowledge, able to imagine a possible world in which there exists transparent iron it then follows that no one is even *prima facie* justified in believing that the production of transparent iron is possible.

### **The compatibility with not- $p$ argument**

Van Inwagen offers a second argument why one should hold that a particular world  $w$  has not been adequately imagined in order to verify some proposition  $p$ . Van Inwagen argues that we have not adequately imagined a world  $w$  that we can take to verify  $p$  if our imaginings are compatible with its being the case that not- $p$ .

Consider the example of transparent iron again. If our imagining of a world at which there exists transparent iron consists of, say, our imagining a world where

we imagine a Nobel Prize acceptance speech in which the new Nobel laureate thanks those who supported him in his long and discouraging quest for transparent iron and displays to a cheering crowd something that looks (in our imaginations) like a chunk of glass, we shall indeed have imagined a world, but it will not be a world in which there is transparent iron (van Inwagen 1998a, 79).

This is because this imagined scenario is compatible with, for instance, the background scenario that transparent iron does not exist, but the scientific community has somehow been deceived into thinking that it does. The Nobel-Prize winning scientist might, for example, merely be holding up a pane of glass while everybody in the room believes that it is transparent iron.

The compatibility-with-not- $p$  argument functions in two ways. First, it functions as an argument, on its own, to establish that some imagined world  $w$  has not been sufficiently imagined so as to verify  $p$ . Second, however, it also functions as an argument to support the structural-detail argument. That is, one might ask the question ‘how do we know when we’ve imagined some world  $w$  to a sufficient level of structural detail so as to verify  $p$ ?’. One response is to ask the question ‘is this scenario compatible with not- $p$ ?’. If it is then one, according to van Inwagen, has certainly not imagined the scenario to a sufficient level of structural detail.

This still leaves the following question open, however: how do we know when we’ve imagined some world  $w$  to a sufficient level of structural detail so as to verify  $p$  when it is not clear whether or not  $w$  is compatible with not- $p$ ? Van Inwagen does not give an explicit answer to this question. However, given what he says in ‘Modal

Epistemology', I think we can conclude that it would be something along the lines of the following:

Has the imaginer imagined  $w$  to the level of structural detail that *an expert in the relevant scientific field concerned with verifying  $p$  would have imagined  $w$ ?*

If the answer is 'yes' then  $p$  has been verified; if 'no' then it has not. I say this because van Inwagen's two examples (the example of the purple cow and the example of the transparent iron) both require the imaginer to have imagined the world to the level of structural detail that an expert in the relevant field of scientific enquiry would have imagined that world. In the transparent-iron example, for instance, van Inwagen says that in order to be justified in asserting that it is possible that transparent iron exists one would have to imagine a world that contains transparent iron with the 'structural detail comparable to that of the imaginings of condensed-matter physicists' (van Inwagen 1998a, 80). Moreover, in the case of the naturally purple cow van Inwagen argues that he doubts the philosopher has imagined the world at which there is a naturally purple cow to the level of structural detail concerning 'the coding structures that would be responsible for [the purple pigment and] its production and its proper placement in a cow's coat' (van Inwagen 1998a, 78). This is a level of detail that, I would expect, could be achieved only by a scientist working in the area of genetics or microbiology. In sum, it seems that, according to van Inwagen, for any proposition  $p$ , if the imagined world  $w$  that one takes to verify  $p$  has not been imagined to a sufficient level of structural detail, or is compatible with not- $p$ , then the possibility-claim  $p$  should be considered among FP.

### **Modal scepticism and the possibility of the resurrection**

We can now return to our question: does the possibility-claim  $p'$  belong to FP? Given my above discussion in order to answer this question we need to answer the following further questions. First, 'has the world  $w'$  that verifies  $p'$  been imagined to a sufficient level of structural detail?'. Second, 'has  $w'$  been imagined to a sufficient level of structural detail such that it rules out the compatibility of  $w'$  with not- $p'$ ?'.

The answer to the first question, *prima facie*, seems to be 'no'. One reason for this is that we are still left with several questions about the details of  $w'$  that remain

unanswered. What does it take for God to remove some organism  $O$ 's corpse? What does it take for God to replace  $O$ 's corpse with a simulacrum? Are we to believe that van Inwagen has imagined this scenario in some structural detail comparable to that of the imaginings of, say, an astrophysicist examining the pressures and strains on an organism traveling to the outer reaches of space? Are we to believe that van Inwagen has imagined the preservation processes that God would have to carry out in order to preserve a corpse for thousands of years that would enable it to have its life begin again?

Posing these questions does not demonstrate that van Inwagen has not imagined  $w'$  to a sufficient level of structural detail so as to verify  $p'$ , nor does it demonstrate that imagining  $w'$  is compatible with its being the case that not- $p'$ . To do this we need to point out where the relevant detail is lacking in the story and/or describe how it is that  $w'$  is compatible with not- $p'$ . I think there are many areas of detail that one would expect to find (but that we do not get) in van Inwagen's simulacrum story that, given further discussion, might lead to our viewing  $w'$  as not having been imagined to a sufficient level of detail so as to verify  $p'$ , or might lead to our thinking that  $w'$  is compatible with not- $p'$ . It is sufficient for our purposes, however, to point out just one area of van Inwagen's simulacrum story that has not been adequately imagined. In what follows, I focus on the preservation and resuscitation of the corpse.

A part of God's task, according to the simulacrum story, would be to preserve the corpses of the dead such that the processes of biological decay would stop before progressing too far. How will God preserve the corpses of the dead? Van Inwagen's simulacrum story does not tell us. Cryogenic freezing, however, seems to be the best candidate explanation that we have to help us conceive of this scenario. I say this for two reasons. First, cryogenic freezing seems to be a method that lends itself well to the task of explaining how God could preserve the corpses. Second, the example of a cryogenically frozen corpse is the only example that van Inwagen gives of a corpse that has been preserved in a way that is sufficient for the continuation of that

particular corpse's life.<sup>140</sup> Upon the cryopreservation of a cat, for example, van Inwagen writes,

I find it attractive to suppose that the cat's life persists even when the cat is frozen. I would describe the frozen cat's life this way: Before the cat was frozen, its life consisted mostly of chemical reactions and various relatively large-scale physical processes (the breaking and establishing of chemical bonds, the movement of fluids under hydraulic pressure, the transport of ions); when the cat was frozen, its life was 'squeezed into' various small-scale physical processes (the orbiting of electrons and the exchange of photons by charged particles.) Its life became the sum of those subchemical changes that underlie and constitute chemical and large-scale physical unchange. But the life was *there*, disposed to expand into its normal state at the moment sufficient energy should become available to it. I, who am fond of oxymorons, would describe the frozen cat as a living corpse (van Inwagen 1990, 147).

What is it about a particular cryogenically frozen corpse that is sufficient for the persistence of its life? It seems that, according to van Inwagen, it is the 'various small-scale physical processes' that are sufficient for the continuation of that corpse's life. That is, even though these 'small-scale physical processes' (e.g., the orbiting of electrons and the exchange of photons by charged particles) are not equivalent to the 'large-scale physical processes' (e.g., the breaking and establishing of chemical bonds, the movement of fluids under hydraulic pressure, the transport of ions) that are typical of life, the life, as van Inwagen notes, is still *'there'*. Consequently, van Inwagen calls a corpse that has been frozen before the processes of biological decay have progressed too far a 'living corpse' (van Inwagen 1990, 147).

Van Inwagen realizes, however, that there are some who may argue that because the large-scale physical processes that are typical of a life have ceased, it is contrived to say that the organism that has been cryogenically frozen (a living corpse) 'is alive' (van Inwagen 1990, 147). In consequence, van Inwagen allows it to be the case that

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<sup>140</sup>William Hasker also supplies van Inwagen's God with this method. He notes, '[a]t death, God plays the part of the practitioners of cryonics, placing the body in suspension to prevent further damage or deterioration. Then at the resurrection, God assumes the role of the future medical rescuers: he reanimates the corpse, heals its fatal injury or illness, and puts the revitalized person on the road to a fuller life' (Hasker 1999, 223).

one can say of an organism that has been cryogenically frozen that its life has been ‘suspended’ (van Inwagen 1990, 147). Van Inwagen writes that ‘in general, a life has been suspended if it has ceased and the simples that were caught up in it at the moment it ceased retain—owing to the mere absence of disruptive forces—their individual properties and relations to one another’ (van Inwagen 1990, 147).

Accordingly, we might say that an organism whose life has been suspended (not disrupted) can have its life begin again, but because its life has ceased (i.e., the large-scale physical processes typical of life have ceased) we can say that the organism is dead.<sup>141</sup>

This distinction between a life that has been squeezed and is still *there* and a life that has been suspended is, I think, purely terminological. The ontological nature of a corpse that has had its life suspended is the same as a corpse that has had its life squeezed. The simples that compose a corpse that has had its life squeezed and the simples that compose a corpse that has had its life suspended both possess the same (type) ‘small-scale physical processes’. The difference is just that there is, for those who prefer to say that the life has been suspended, a ‘stipulative sharpening of the meaning of “alive”’ (van Inwagen 1990, 147). For the sake of argument, I will adopt van Inwagen’s interlocutor’s stipulative sharpening and continue to refer to organisms that have had been cryogenically frozen as organisms whose lives have been suspended.

This is where the problem arises for van Inwagen. A corpse that has *not* been cryogenically frozen also possesses persistent ‘small-scale physical processes’ at, for example, the subatomic level. The simples that virtually compose a corpse whose life has been disrupted, for example, still constitute various kinds of small-scale physical processes, and are involved in activity such as the orbiting of electrons and the exchange of photons by charged particles. This being the case, as Jason Eberl notes, although

[v]an Inwagen shares the general intuition that the persistent microlevel activity of an unfrozen corpse is insufficient to characterize it as alive...[h]e

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<sup>141</sup> This point is contested. See, for example, (Gilmore 2013). One may argue that (as Gilmore does) in this case the organism should be classified as neither dead nor alive. For the purposes of fulfilling van Inwagen’s requirement that all those who share in the sin of Adam must die, however, I will classify cryogenic freezing as a form of death.

allows...the same level of activity in a cryopreserved body to suffice as the life—and the numerically same life—as the organism before its macrolevel life functions were suspended. The only difference van Inwagen cites to differentiate the two cases is that the microlevel activity of a cryopreserved body is ‘disposed to expand into its normal state at the moment sufficient energy should become available to it’ (Eberl 2008, 71).

That is, according to van Inwagen, the cryogenically frozen corpse and the corpse that has not been cryogenically frozen are, at least given our current imaginative powers, structurally indistinguishable.

So, the answer to the question whether the world  $w'$  that verifies  $p'$  has been imagined to a sufficient level of structural detail seems to be ‘no’. Van Inwagen has not told us what it is about the cryogenically preserved corpse (i.e., anything about the intrinsic properties and relations between the simples that compose the cryogenically preserved corpse) that enables it to have its suspended life begin again that does not also go for a corpse that has not been cryogenically frozen. One might think, though, that in order adequately to have imagined the preservation process to a sufficient level of structural detail so as to verify  $p'$  one should be able to imagine what it is about the two corpses (a corpse that has been cryogenically frozen and a corpse that has not) that enables one, and not the other, to have its life begin again. After all, this is just the level of structural detail that van Inwagen, it seems, requires other philosophers to give of other imagined worlds.

Take, for example, van Inwagen’s case of the naturally purple cow. Many know (some in more detail than others) that there is something about a particular cow’s DNA that disposes it to be a cow with certain pigmentation. Moreover, many share the general intuition that if we were to change the relevant section of a cow’s DNA it would change that cow’s colour. But we do not know, precisely, what it would take for, say, purple pigmentation to be inserted into any cow DNA or ‘cow-like-thing-but-for-colour’ DNA. Likewise, many share the intuition that it is something about the microlevel activity of a cryogenically frozen corpse that disposes it to have its suspended life begin again. We do not, however, know what it is, at the level of structural detail concerning the properties and relations between the simples that compose a cryogenically frozen corpse, that enables it to be disposed to have its

suspended life begin again. Since I doubt that any philosopher has imagined what it is about a cryogenically preserved corpse that disposes it to have its suspended life begin again, I suggest that, if we accept a version of van Inwagen's modal scepticism, we should not accept that the simulacrum story establishes that it is possible for God to preserve the corpse of a human organism in such a way as to ensure that it can have its suspended life begin again.

Whether or not one accepts my argument to demonstrate that  $w'$  has not been imagined to a sufficient level of structural detail to verify  $p'$  on van Inwagen's own terms, there is a further difficulty for van Inwagen. This difficulty concerns the question whether the world  $w'$  that verifies  $p'$  has been imagined in such a way as to rule out the compatibility of  $w'$  with  $\text{not-}p'$ . In other words, are there any other propositions that are consistent with  $\text{not-}p'$  but that are also consistent with one's imagining  $w'$ ?

I think there are. Take the proposition  $p''$  that is consistent with  $\text{not-}p'$ : God, on the day of resurrection, causes the simples that virtually compose a particular corpse that he has kept for safekeeping to be caught up in a new life.

In order to demonstrate that  $w'$  is consistent with  $p''$  let us assume, again, that God's chosen method of preservation is cryogenic freezing. As mentioned above, however, we do not know what it is about the simples that compose a cryogenically frozen organism that enable it to have its suspended life begin again, and what it is about the simples that virtually compose a non-cryogenically frozen corpse that does not enable it to have its life begin again. Since this is the case, it is compatible with our imagining  $w'$  that the corpse that God resurrects does not in fact meet the relevant conditions for having its life restarted again (since we do not know what it would take for any corpse to meet these conditions). In consequence, it may be the case that, while we think that we have imagined God's preserving a corpse whose life has been suspended, we have actually imagined God's preserving a corpse whose life has not been suspended but disrupted; a (virtual) corpse that has been subject to the normal room-temperature processes of biological decay sufficient for disruption and has, perhaps, then been frozen. The simples that virtually compose a corpse such as this, upon resurrection, will get caught up in a new life, a life started by God's miracle. Consequently, in this case, we have not imagined a case of resurrection, but a case of

God's bringing a new organism into existence. We have imagined  $p''$ : that God, on the day of resurrection, causes the simples that virtually compose a particular corpse that he has kept for safekeeping to be caught up in a new life.

In this respect the simulacrum story seems comparable to the transparent-iron case. Just as the Nobel-prize-winning scientist holds up a (supposed) piece of transparent iron, and this is consistent with its being the case that he is not holding up a piece of transparent iron but a pane of glass, so too our imagining God's resurrecting a human organism according to  $w'$  is consistent with God's giving a pile of simples arranged humanwise (that were once caught up in a life) a new life.

This brings me to the end of my argument. If my argument is correct, it establishes that van Inwagen should be sceptical of the possibility-claim  $p'$  and, if this is the case, then van Inwagen has not, as he aimed, 'establish[ed] a possibility' (van Inwagen 1998b, 50).<sup>142</sup>

### **Objections**

There are several objections that van Inwagen could make to my argument. I will state each objection before offering a response.

*Objection 1:* Van Inwagen may respond by arguing that he never says that cryogenic freezing is the method that God uses to preserve a corpse, so any objection that I mount against his metaphysics of the resurrection that turns on the nature of a cryogenically frozen corpse is to attack a straw man.

*Response:* Two things must be noted in response. First, as mentioned above, I supplied van Inwagen's God with the process of cryogenic freezing because a corpse that has been cryogenically frozen is the only example that he gives of an organism that has had its life cease but has not had its life disrupted and so can have its life restarted. So, in the absence of any description of this preservation process, I use a process that van Inwagen affirms is plausible. Second, even if we remove cryogenic freezing from the story, my argument still stands. Perhaps I merely imagine a human organism floating free in space that is seemingly not undergoing any processes of

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<sup>142</sup> This, of course, requires something like the following to be true: for any proposition  $p$ ,  $S$  cannot take  $p$  to have been 'established' if  $S$  is sceptical of the possible truth of  $p$ . I take this to be uncontroversial.

decay. My imagining this scenario (*sans* cryogenic freezing) is still compatible with its being the case that this corpse was once a human organism that has now had its life disrupted. If this is the case then my then imagining this organism's subsequent animation is not my imagining God's bringing the organism that has died back to life, but God's causing the simples that virtually compose this organism's corpse to get caught up into a new life.

*Objection 2:* Van Inwagen may argue that one could be justified in asserting the possible truth  $p'$  even though  $S$  cannot imagine a world that verifies  $p'$  because God, for example, through Scripture, has told her that  $p'$  is true and God, being infallible, cannot be mistaken about  $p'$ .

*Response:* In reply, we can simply point out that Scripture does not tell us that  $p'$  is possible. Scripture does tell us that the resurrection is possible but it does not tell us that materialism with regard to the human person is possibly true (or that the resurrection given a materialist account of the human person is possibly true). Consequently, given that van Inwagen's materialist metaphysics of the human person makes the resurrection seem impossible (even for an omnipotent being) to achieve, in order to be justified in asserting the possible truth of  $p'$  Scripture would need to tell us that materialism is possibly true (as well as tell us that the resurrection is possible).

*Objection 3:* van Inwagen may respond by arguing that the possibility-claim  $p'$  is not, in fact, far-removed at all, but can be counted among BP.

*Response:* Responding to the claim that the possibility-claim  $p'$  is among BP is difficult, not least because van Inwagen does not explicitly give us any necessary and/or sufficient conditions for saying when a certain possibility-claim can be counted among BP,<sup>143</sup> besides stating that a possibility-claim can be counted among BP if it is a claim about the 'ordinary,' is known 'non-inferentially' and contains no 'intrinsic impossibility'.

There is, however, a response. One can note that this would certainly be a strange response to come from van Inwagen. If he thought that the possibility-claim  $p'$  was

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<sup>143</sup> He writes, for example, 'how do we know "simple, obvious" modal statements to be true? What is the ground of "basic" modal knowledge? I do not know how to answer these questions' (van Inwagen 1998a, 74).

among BP then he should not *need* to go to the trouble of telling a story that verifies  $p'$ . Furthermore, it seems as though van Inwagen does need to tell such a story. As mentioned above given his materialist metaphysics of the human person 'it is absolutely impossible, even as an accomplishment of God, that a man who has been burned to ashes or been eaten by worms should ever live again' (van Inwagen 1998b, 48). Since it certainly seems that some human organisms or, at least, their remains, will be eaten by worms, this does seem to demonstrate, given van Inwagen's metaphysics, that it is absolutely impossible for God to restore these human organisms to existence. The assertion of the possibility-claim  $p'$ , therefore, needs some sort of justification if it is to be believed in the light of van Inwagen's materialist metaphysics.

*Objection 4:* van Inwagen might point out that, since conceivability arguments are subject-dependent, and given that what one subject takes to verify some proposition may be different from what another subject takes to verify that same proposition,  $w'$  can still serve to justify the assertion of the possible truth of  $p'$ , so long as a particular subject takes  $w'$  to verify  $p'$ . That is, so long as that particular subject is not a modal sceptic.

*Response:* In response we should note that my aim in this section has only been to show that one cannot simultaneously accept van Inwagen's modal scepticism and van Inwagen's argument as put forward in 'The Possibility of Resurrection'. This, I think, has been achieved. It is, unfortunately, outside the scope of this Chapter to argue in favour of modal scepticism (or something relevantly similar). In consequence, I leave it up to the reader to decide whether or not she finds van Inwagen's modal scepticism (or something similar) independently plausible.<sup>144</sup>

In sum, van Inwagen, in his argument for the possibility of the resurrection, fails to establish that it is possible for God to resurrect human organisms. This is because the world that van Inwagen describes in order to verify that it is possible for God to

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<sup>144</sup> I might add that there is a strong precedent for modal scepticism of a van Inwagenian sort, especially concerning matters of personal identity across time. As Paul Snowdon, for example, notes when considering the brain-transplant intuition, '[t]he link between imaginability and genuine metaphysical possibility has been thoroughly debated recently, with the result, as I see it, that imaginability cannot be taken as a guide to possibility' (Snowdon 2014, 207). See also (Wilkes 1993; Gendler 2002).

resurrect human organisms has neither been imagined in a sufficient amount of structural detail nor imagined in a way that rules out the possibility of its being the case that God does not resurrect a human organism, but only brings a new organism into existence.

## 8.2 Moderate modal scepticism and the possibility of life after death

The above argument is an *ad hominem* argument: it is an argument against van Inwagen and van Inwagen alone (or, at least, those who accept something very similar to van Inwagenian modal scepticism). *Ad hominem* arguments are risky because their scope is narrow. By refuting van Inwagen on his own terms I leave out of consideration all of those folk who accept that materialism is possibly true and that one of the simulacrum models is possibly true (i.e., those who are not modal sceptics since no one to my mind has demonstrated that the simulacrum models are incoherent). In fact, one may argue that van Inwagen's interlocutors will probably not be modal sceptics. They will probably not be modal sceptics because they may need controversial modal premises (of the kind the sceptic will refuse) to justify their belief in the existence of, for example, souls.<sup>145</sup> Not only this, however, but it seems to me that at least one of van Inwagen's arguments for modal scepticism is flawed. In particular, I think that van Inwagen's modal scepticism proves too much. Here is why.

Take the compatibility with not-*p* argument mentioned above. We can state this argument formally as follows.

Let '*p*' stand for any non-modal proposition and '*P*' be the modal form of that proposition. For example, if *p*<sub>1</sub>=flying pigs exist, then *P*<sub>1</sub>= it is possible flying pigs exist.

- (1d) One can justifiably assert some modal proposition *P* if one has imagined a situation, *S*, that one takes to verify *p* (this is a form of Yablo-style conceivability (cf. Yablo 1993)).

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<sup>145</sup> I should add that I do not appeal to any modal arguments to justify my belief in the existence of a soul and so it is not necessary that one need not be a modal sceptic if one is to believe in the existence of the soul.

- (2d) If  $S$  is compatible with not- $p$ , then one should not take  $S$  to be a situation that verifies  $p$ .
- (3d) If  $p$  is an extraordinary proposition then the imagined situation  $S$  is likely to be compatible with both  $p$  and not- $p$ .

*Therefore,*

- (4d) One should be sceptical that one can justifiably assert an extraordinary modal proposition  $P$  if one takes oneself to be justified in asserting  $P$  in virtue of one's imagining a situation,  $S$ , that one takes to verify  $p$ .

There is, however, a major problem with this argument (and arguments of this type). The problem is that they prove too much. Put simply, if one accepts that the argument is sound then one has reason to be sceptical about some of the more mundane modal claims; modal claims that the modal sceptic does not want to be sceptical about.

Take, for example, the claim that it is possible that John F. Kennedy died from natural causes.<sup>146</sup> Let us say that I take myself justifiably to assert this claim by imagining a situation in which John F. Kennedy is old, lying on his bed and takes his final breath. If the above argument is sound, however, one should be sceptical of this claim. This is because this situation is compatible with, say, John F. Kennedy's having been poisoned. In this case, we should not take ourselves to be justified in asserting some of the more mundane modal propositions —modal claims that van Inwagen takes us to be justified in asserting.

There is, primarily, one reason for instability: current sceptical arguments place too strict a constraint on the sources of our modal knowledge. For example, in order to imagine a situation at which  $p$  is true one needs to imagine a situation in such a way as to ensure that it is incompatible with not- $p$ . This is an overly demanding task for reasons given above; even imagining situations that we take to verify relatively

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<sup>146</sup> Geirsson (2005) makes a similar point to the point I am making here. Geirsson, however, takes the structural-detail argument (or what he calls the 'completeness argument') as his target.

quotidian modal claims do not meet this constraint. For this reason, van Inwagen's argument for modal scepticism is flawed.<sup>147</sup>

There are two ways by which one can progress, however. First, one could come up with a more modest argument for modal scepticism that is not unstable but still rules out one's justifiably asserting possibly  $p'$ . Second one could reject modal scepticism but still hold that van Inwagen does not succeed at achieving another, perhaps more important aim. I will consider both.

First, there are other arguments for modal scepticism that do not fall prey to the charge of instability. Peter Kung (2010) argues that *assignment* is the central problem with our using the imagination as a source of our modal knowledge. It is assignment that, I think, occurs when one imagines scenarios at which certain far-removed propositions are true. I will rehearse Kung's account of the imagination now.

As mentioned, I take the standard account of the imagination as the source of our modal knowledge to be Yablo's (1993) account. Put simply, it can be expressed as follows:

For any proposition,  $p$ ,  $S$  is *prima facie* justified in asserting the possible truth of  $p$  (i.e.,  $P$ ) if  $S$  takes herself to have imagined a world that verifies  $p$ .

Importantly, it should be noted that I assume that some subject  $S$ 's relation to some imagined world,  $w$ , at which  $p$  is true is an evidential one.<sup>148</sup> By this I mean that  $S$  takes  $w$  to be *evidence* that  $P$ . While it is an evidential relation, however, it is a strong evidential relation. After all, merely having evidence that some proposition  $P$  is true does not mean that one should take  $P$  to be verified by that evidence. Verification of some proposition  $P$  requires a preponderance of evidence for  $P$  over evidence against  $P$ . Evidence that, let us say, makes  $P$  probable for one with respect to one's total evidence set excluding that proposition.

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<sup>147</sup> I think that this argument can be amended once one takes into account the prior probability of one's hypothesis. I will not pursue this line of thought here, however, as it would take me too far from the main aim of this thesis.

<sup>148</sup> As far as I am aware this is the standard understanding. Both Kung (2010) and Geirsson (2005), for example, understand it this way.

Whether or not Yablo's account is true,<sup>149</sup> I understand Yablo's account to be a plausible description of what happens when philosophers take some imagining to be a guide to the possibility of some proposition. The question to which I will now turn is this: what is it that happens when philosophers imagine worlds that they take to verify *p*? I will begin by considering the most prolific kind of imagining, and the kind of imagining that I understand philosophers to be using when they take themselves to be justified in asserting, say, modal propositions that are remote from the practical business of everyday life: visual imagining. I should note that what I say for visual imagining below can go for any kind of sensory imagining e.g., auditory imagining, olfactory imagining etc. I will consider non-sensory imagining after visual imagining.

Visual imagining involves mental imagery.<sup>150</sup> Let us say that I want justifiably to believe that it is possible for me to run out Aaron Finch during a cricket match. To do so, according to Yablo, I could imagine a possible world that I take to verify this proposition. Let us say that I visualize (i.e., 'picture' or 'bring before my mind's eye' a mental image of) a batsman in cricket whites on a cricket field hitting a cricket ball. I also visualize the batsman opposite running for the wicket. I also visualize a fielder, myself, picking the ball off the grass and throwing it at the wicket before the batsman can make it across the crease.

Kung asks about a similar imagining '[h]ow should we theorize *what* you imagine, the *content* of your imagining?' (Kung 2016b, 107). Following Kung we can reply that some of the content was *basic qualitative* content. It comes from the image itself: that the batsman's kit is white and that the cricket ball is red, for example. Much of my imagining's content, however, is not basic qualitative content but *assigned*. I imagine that it is I, Thom Atkinson, picking up the ball. I am imagining that it is a cricket match that I am playing in and not, for example, a game of quick-cricket with a few friends. There is nothing about the basic qualitative content of my imagining

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<sup>149</sup> That is, whether or not one is, in fact, *prima facie* justified in asserting the possible truth of *p* if one has imagined a world that one takes to verify *p*.

<sup>150</sup> I should add that I wish to remain neutral here with regards to the debate over whether or not mental imagery consists in representational brain states.

that confirms these supposed facts; they are assigned by me to the imagining.<sup>151</sup> The central difference between basic qualitative content and assigned content is that basic qualitative content is a part of your mental image while assigned content is not.

Assigned content comes in two forms: labels and stipulations. When one makes an assignment about the basic qualitative content of a certain imagining one can do so by labelling that content. For example, when I imagine the fielder who successfully throws the ball at the wicket as being me —Thom Atkinson— I am *labelling* that fielder <Thom Atkinson>. There is nothing especially distinctive about my mental image that makes it the case that the fielder is Thom Atkinson, but there is some basic qualitative content to my imagining that I can label <Thom Atkinson>. One can also make an assignment that is independent of the basic qualitative content of the imagining altogether. When this occurs we can say that one is making a *stipulation*. For example, when I assign that my imagining is happening *during a cricket match*. There is no part of my mental image that I can label <during a cricket match>. Both labelled and stipulated content is non-pictorial.

It is assignment that makes trouble for modal epistemology. The central problem is that ‘non-pictorial content does not provide evidence for metaphysical possibility’ (Kung 2016a, 234). The reason for this is that there are very few constraints, if any, on what we can assign to a specific imagining, and what ‘constraints there are have no modal evidential value’ (Kung 2016b, 110). Kung demonstrates that what constraints there are have no modal evidential value by comparing the constraints on our basic qualitative content to the constraints on our assigned content.

There is one fairly obvious constraint on our basic qualitative content. Kung notes that the basic qualitative content of our imaginings is ‘constrained by what kind of mental imagery we can produce’ (Kung 2016b, 110). Take, for example, the proposition: it is possible that there exists a square circle. Kung notes that we cannot visualize a shape that is both round and square.

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<sup>151</sup> I agree with Kung that this is not a two-stage process. One does not imagine basic qualitative content and then assign certain facts to that content.

Assignments, however, have no constraints that are of any worth for modal epistemology. (I will consider one possible constraint below). The problem with this is that ‘[i]f assignment has no constraints at all —if for any  $p$ , we can imagine that  $p$  via assignment— then imagining via assignment provides no evidence for possibility because it fails to discriminate between possible and impossible  $ps$ ’ (Kung 2016b, 110). In fact, as Kung points out, ‘assignment makes imagining the impossible possible’ (Kung 2016b, 110). Most of us, for example, take ourselves to be able to imagine *Back to the Future*. That is, we take ourselves (problems concerning fictional entities aside) to be able to image a world at which the following proposition is true: Marty McFly travels back in time to 1955 and changes his father from a loser into a confident leader (cf. Kung 2010, 621–622). But what we have imagined is impossible; no one can change the past. Kung’s theory accurately explains why. Part of the imagined content is stipulated; in particular we imagine that we have a case of ‘time travel by stipulating in some scenes that it is 1955...*again*’ (Kung 2010, 622).

Kung does, however, go on to consider one possible constraint on our assigned contents, and demonstrates that it has no modal evidential value. One possible constraint on our assignments is absolute certainty.<sup>152</sup> Kung asserts that if we are absolutely certain that some proposition  $p$  is false then we will not be able to imagine a world at which  $p$  is true and *vice versa*.<sup>153</sup> Kung gives the example of imagining that  $2 = 2$ . Many of us cannot imagine it to be the case that ‘ $2 = 2$ ’ is false. Kung argues that because we are absolutely certain that  $2 = 2$ , we cannot imagine a world at which it is false. Likewise, if we are ‘absolutely certain’ that some proposition is false, we cannot imagine a world at which it is true. He goes on to point out, however, that if there are no constraints other than certainty on our being able to visually imagine some world at which  $p$  is true, then what makes us able to assign  $p$  to some imagining is, seemingly, our mere lack of certainty that not- $p$ . But here is the central problem: one’s not being certain about the truth of not- $p$  cannot be ‘counted as evidence of  $p$ ’s possibility’ (Kung 2016b, 111). In consequence, if some proposition  $p$  is true at some

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<sup>152</sup> By ‘absolute certainty’ Kung means ‘the strongest possible psychological certainty: to have no doubts at all, for there to be nothing one is more certain of. This kind of certainty marks the *cogito* and very few other propositions’ (Kung 2016b, 110–111).

<sup>153</sup> One may argue that this seems wrong. For example, one may be absolutely certain that one exists but one may find it easy to imagine a world at which they do not exist. I refer the reader to Kung’s response to this point. See (Kung 2010, 629–630).

imagined world  $w$  and this follows from  $S$ 's assignment alone, then  $w$  cannot be taken as a world that verifies  $p$ .

At this point we should acknowledge that we cannot escape intuition here. When we bring before our minds a possible world,  $w$ , at which it seems to us that  $p$  is true we can ask the question: what source are we using to evaluate the possible world,  $w$ , as evidence for  $P$ ? I agree with Kung (2010, 650–652) that it must be intuition. Or, at least, I do not know what else it could be.<sup>154</sup>

I can now, briefly, return to non-sensory imagining. Non-sensory imagining is imagining that contains no imagery. As David Chalmers notes, '[t]here is a sense in which we can imagine situations that do not seem to be potential contents of perceptual experiences' (Chalmers 2002, 151). Take, for example, my imagining 'the existence of an invisible being that leaves no trace on perception' (Chalmers 2002, 151). In this case I do not (and perhaps cannot) form a mental image of this invisible being. Nevertheless, as Chalmers notes, when imagining  $p$  in a non-sensory way 'we do more than merely suppose that [ $p$ ], or entertain the hypothesis that [ $p$ ]. Our relation to [ $p$ ] has a mediated objectual character that is analogous to that found in the case of perceptual imaginability' (Chalmers 2002, 151). Occurrences of non-sensory imagining, given what I have said above, however, cannot verify some modal proposition  $P$ . This is because non-sensory imagining is merely imagining by stipulation. I merely stipulate that  $p$  is true at some possible world  $w$ ; there is no pictorial content to my imagining that I take to be evidence that  $P$ .<sup>155</sup>

This is not to say, however, that the imagination cannot provide evidence for the possible truth of some proposition  $p$ . In particular, some imagining may provide evidence for possibility on two occasions. First, when there is no assigned content to one's imagining. Take, for example, the proposition that there exists a three-sided shape. In order justifiably to assert the possible truth of this proposition one may

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<sup>154</sup> As Colin McGinn recognises, it could not be perception. He writes, '[i]magining that  $p$  is not a special case of perceiving that  $p$ , since it is not a type of *perceiving* at all' (McGinn 2004, 146).

<sup>155</sup> I should note that I realise that there are, discussed in the literature, forms of nonimaginative conceiving. They are not considered in this paper. My reason for not considering them is the same as Kung's; I remain suspicious of them '[u]ntil we have a...satisfying account of what nonimaginative conceiving is' (Kung 2010, 657).

attempt, among other things, to imagine a possible world at which this proposition is true. One could, for example, visually imagine a three-sided shape. This imagining seems to verify the possible truth of the proposition that there exists a three-sided shape, and this imagining does not contain any assignments.<sup>156</sup>

Second, some imagining may provide evidence for possibility when the assigned content of one's imagining has been independently corroborated or, as Kung notes, '*authenticated*' (Kung 2010, 642). Take, for example, my imagining running Aaron Finch out during a cricket match. My imagining this scenario (as described above) may be authenticated. I have a reason (independent of my mental image) to think that the assigned content of my mental image is metaphysically possible. My reasons may be twofold. First, I may know *via* some other source that some assigned content of my mental image is metaphysically possible. For example, I may have it on good authority (*via* testimony) that Aaron Finch actually exists and so is metaphysically possible. Second, I may be able to engage in a further imaginative exercise, say, imagining another possible world at which the assigned content of my original imagining is not itself assigned.

Likewise, my imagining that John F. Kennedy died from natural causes may be taken as evidence that it is possible that John F. Kennedy died from natural causes. The reason for this is that the assigned content of my imagining can easily be independently corroborated. I know that it is metaphysically possible that John F. Kennedy exist because I know that he actually did exist. I also know that it is metaphysically possible for human beings to die from natural causes and that John F. Kennedy was a human being.

The fact that the imagination can, on occasion, provide evidence for some proposition's possibility, however, is consistent with van Inwagen's argument. As Peter Hartl (a recent critic of van Inwagen<sup>157</sup>) points out, van Inwagen allows it to be

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<sup>156</sup> Hartl notes that van Inwagen does not give 'a clear example of a successful justificatory process *via* Yablo-style conceivability' (Hartl 2016, 275). I take the case just mentioned to be one.

<sup>157</sup> My primary aim is to respond to Geirsson and not Hartl. This is primarily because Hartl's criticism of van Inwagen is, to a large extent, the same as Geirsson's. Moreover, Hartl is engaging, it seems to me, primarily with Peter Hawke's modal epistemology or van Inwagen's 'completeness argument'. I attempt to defend neither Hawke's position nor the completeness argument.

the case (at least implicitly) that the imagination ‘can *in principle* be a guide to possibility’ (Hartl 2016, 271). What van Inwagen contests is that the imagination can be a guide to the possibility of propositions that are far-removed from the practical business of everyday life and, I take it, that my running Aaron Finch out during a cricket match is not far-removed from the practical business of everyday life. It is not, for example, at the periphery of scientific investigation or in the realm of metaphysical debate (I hope).

All of this, I think, provides us with a reason for endorsing a form of modal scepticism.<sup>158</sup> Given the above account it is clear, I think, why: the possible truth of some modal proposition *P* that is about matters that are remote from the practical business of everyday life will probably follow from the assigned content of one’s imagining alone. Moreover, these assignments will probably not be amenable to authentication or, at least, authenticating one’s assigned content is rarely, if ever, an operative factor in the philosopher’s justifying some modal claim via imagination.

Take, for example, the two modal propositions that van Inwagen focuses on in his paper, *j*: it is possible that there exists a naturally purple cow and *k*: it is possible that there exists transparent iron. In order justifiably to assert *j* one may visually imagine, say, a purple cow standing in a field. The problem is that imagining that this cow is *naturally* purple follows from an assignment alone. It follows, in particular, from the stipulation that the cow’s being purple is natural. Likewise, in order justifiably to assert *k* one may visually imagine a

Nobel Prize acceptance speech in which the new Nobel laureate thanks those who supported him in his long and discouraging quest for transparent iron and displays to a cheering crowd something that looks (in our imaginations) like a chunk of glass (van Inwagen 1998a, 79).

The problem is that imagining that what the Nobel laureate is holding up is iron

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<sup>158</sup> Kung does not think that his account supports modal scepticism of a ‘pervasive’ or ‘thoroughgoing’ (Kung 2016a, 241) sort. If by this he means that his account does not support radical modal scepticism (i.e., scepticism with regards to all modal propositions) then I agree. On the other hand, if he means that he does not think his account supports scepticism about some philosophers’ justifiably asserting a modal proposition that belongs to FP, then I take this Chapter, in part, to demonstrate that he is wrong.

follows from assignment alone; in particular, our labelling the object that the Nobel laureate is holding up <iron>. Moreover, it seems highly unlikely that anyone, given our current state of knowledge, will be able to authenticate the assigned content of the worlds that we have so far imagined and take it to verify *j* or *k*. Consider, for example, *j*. The philosopher will have to authenticate that, for example, that

there is a chemically possible purple pigment such that the coding for the structures that would be responsible for its production and its proper placement in a cow's coat could be coherently inserted into any DNA that was really cow DNA—or even 'cow-like-thing-but-for-color' DNA (van Inwagen 1998a, 78).

For further examples of imaginings that are unsuccessful in their verifying some philosophically important proposition for reasons of assignment see Kung (2016b, 114–115; 2016a).

I should finish my remarks on the imagination as a source of modal knowledge by saying that, in this Chapter, I take myself to have given a fallibilist account of our justifiably asserting modal propositions that are arrived at *via* the imagination. In general, our intuitive responses to everyday imagined scenarios (as described) may be taken as *prima facie* justified. This does not mean, however, that we should take all assertions of possibility that are arrived at via imagination as *prima facie* justified. In particular, one should take the above to be an argument for the conclusion that it is reasonable to suspend judgment as to whether or not an assertion of some possibility-proposition that is on the periphery of scientific investigation or in the realm of metaphysical speculation is justified.

What are the results of this for this thesis? First, since *P'* is a modal claim that is remote from the practical business of everyday life one is justified in being sceptical of this claim. Any world that I may imagine at which *p'* is true will be one at which this truth probably follows from assignment alone. We can, however, do one better. We can demonstrate that the possible truth of *p'* at *w'* follows from assignment alone; in particular, the truth of *p'* at *w'* follows from a label. To do this, remember that an

organism that has had its life suspended and an organism that has recently died via MD1 disruption are, in my imagination, structurally indistinguishable. I cannot imagine wherein the difference between these two organisms consists. Since this is the case, in order for the organism in my imagination to be an organism that has had its life suspended and not an organism that has, say, had its life disrupted, I need to label the organism that I am imagining as an organism whose life has been suspended and not one that has recently undergone disruption. When I visually imagine, say, an organism floating free in space I must label that organism <cryogenically preserved>. Nothing about my mental image makes this label true. That is, nothing described by van Inwagen makes this label appropriate or, at least, more appropriate than the label <life disrupted>.

This is not to say, however, that one cannot, for example, imagine a possible world at which this assigned content is true, or authenticate this assigned content in some other way. Van Inwagen has not, however, shown that he has done this. That is, he has not shown that he has done what is required in order for him to be justified in asserting that it is possible for God to raise human organisms from the dead.

Now it must be clarified that this is not a form of ‘scepticism’ in the Cartesian sense of the word. I agree with van Inwagen when he writes that the name ‘modal scepticism’

was perhaps ill-chosen, since, as I have said, I think that we do know a lot of modal propositions, and in these post-Cartesian days, ‘skeptical’ suggests someone who contends that we know nothing or almost nothing. It should be remembered, however, that there has been another sort of skeptic: someone who contends that the world contains a great deal of institutionalized pretense to knowledge of remote matters concerning which knowledge is in fact not possible. (Montaigne was a skeptic in this sense, as were, perhaps, Sextus and Cicero.) It is in this sense of the word that I am a modal ‘skeptical’ (van Inwagen 1998a, 69).

It is this meaning of the word ‘scepticism’ or ‘sceptic’ that I too wish to endorse. Having said this, modal scepticism is still not especially popular. I fear that so long as a position is called ‘scepticism’ it will have its detractors. There is, however, one more way by which one can respond to the exotic modal claims made by philosophers

who try to defend the possibility of the resurrection given animalism. This response is not a sceptical response, however. In short, one may respond by arguing that although it may be metaphysically possible for an organism that has died to exist again on the Last Day it is not reasonable to believe that an organism that has died can exist again on the Last Day, and that this is what substance dualism was interested in all along.

## CHAPTER 9 – ANIMALISM, DEFENCES AND THE PROBLEM OF LIFE AFTER DEATH

In this chapter I argue that even though the animalist may have successfully responded to the argument from the logical problem of life after death (provided that the above accounts of modal scepticism are false) they have not responded to the more general argument from the problem of life after death. In particular, I argue that to respond to the more general argument one needs to do more than describe a possible world at which God raises a human organism from the dead. Rather, one needs to describe a possible world at which God raises a human organism from the dead and this world needs to be one that it is reasonable to believe may well be actual.

### 9.1 Defences and the argument from the problem of evil

Consider the argument from the logical problem of evil.

- (1b) God is omnipotent.
- (2b) God is omniscient.
- (3b) God is perfectly good.
- (4b) Evil exists.
- (5b) The above propositions (1b)–(4b) form a logically inconsistent set.
- (6b) It is unreasonable to believe a set of propositions that are logically inconsistent.
- (7b) The theist that believes in the existence of evil believes propositions (1b)–(4b).

*Therefore,*

- (8b) The theist that believes in the existence of evil believes something unreasonable.<sup>159</sup>

There is no syntactic contradiction to be found among propositions (1b)–(4b)). In consequence, proponents of the logical problem of evil attempted to demonstrate that a semantic contradiction could be deduced from (1b)–(4b). As James Beebe notes, a

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<sup>159</sup> The conclusion of the original logical problem of evil was, perhaps, stronger than this. Proponents of the argument argued that it is not merely that the theist believes something unreasonable but the theist is irrational if she believes in evil.

contraction can be seen between (4b) and (1b)–(3b), ‘once we think through the implications of the divine attributes cited in (1b) though (3b)’ (cf. Bebee 2016, sect 1). Proponents of the logical problem of evil, so Bebee argues, reason as follows:

- (i) If God is omnipotent, he would be able to prevent all of the evil and suffering in the world.
- (ii) If God is omniscient, he would know about all of the evil and suffering in the world and would know how to eliminate or prevent it.
- (iii) If God is perfectly good, he would want to prevent all of the evil and suffering in the world (cf. Bebee 2016, sect. 1).

Statements (i)–(iii) ‘jointly imply that if the perfect God of theism really existed, there would not be any evil or suffering’ (Bebee 2016, sect. 1). We know, however, that evil exists. To demonstrate this one needs only to point to cases of child molestation, rape, murder, hurricanes, and tsunamis etc. Bebee states that the proponent of the logical problem of evil concludes, therefore

- (iv) If God knows about all of the evil and suffering in the world, knows how to eliminate or prevent it, is powerful enough to prevent it, and yet does not prevent it, he must not be perfectly good.
- (v) If God knows about all of the evil and suffering, knows how to eliminate or prevent it, wants to prevent it, and yet does not do so, he must not be omnipotent.
- (vi) If God is powerful enough to prevent all of the evil and suffering, wants to do so, and yet does not, he must not know about all of the suffering or know how to eliminate or prevent it—that is, he must not be omniscient (Bebee 2016, sect. 1).

From (iv)–(vi) the proponent of the logical problem of evil may infer (give the existence of evil (4b)),

- (vii) God is either not omnipotent, not omniscient or not perfectly good.

Theists, however, believe that

- (viii) God is omnipotent, omniscient and perfectly good.

Thus, we have our required contradiction: the theist asserts (viii) and the existence of evil implies (vii), in consequence, the theist that believes in the existence of evil, therefore, believes a contradiction (namely, that (vii) and (viii) are both true). Premise (5b) is, therefore, justified; the above propositions (1b)–(4b) form a logically inconsistent set because a contradiction can be deduced from (1b)–(4b). The claim that a particular set of propositions contradictory is, of course, equivalent to the claim that it is impossible for all of the propositions in that set to be true at the same time. This claim itself is, in turn, equivalent to the claim that necessarily, if one of the claims in the set is true then at least one of the other claims (or conjunction of the other claims) cannot be true at the same time. The claim made by proponents of the logical problem of evil, therefore, was that necessarily, if evil exists then God (an omnipotent, omniscient and perfectly good being) does not exist. Call this ‘the crucial modal premise’. It is this premise that distinguishes the logical problem of evil from other, later, problems, for example, problems of evil that attempt to demonstrate that the probability of God’s existence is low given the existence of evil.

One way by which the theist can respond to the logical problem of evil is by providing a *defence*. In order to give a defence against an argument one can do a number of things. First, one can show that the argument’s structure is invalid. Second, one can show that one of the premises of the argument is false.<sup>160</sup> Third, one can attempt to cast reasonable doubt on one of the argument’s premises (these last two options are not mutually exclusive: one can cast reasonable doubt on one of the premises of an argument by demonstrating that that premise is false. This, however, is asymmetric: one cannot demonstrate that some proposition is false by casting reasonable doubt on that premise. When one casts reasonable doubt on some premise one is, I take it, merely showing that that premise is more likely than not going to turn out to be false). Fourth, one can attempt to cast reasonable doubt on the validity of the argument’s structure.

The argument structure employed by proponents of the argument from the logical problem of evil is clearly valid. To give a defence against this argument, therefore,

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<sup>160</sup> I should make two things clear. First, in this thesis, I understand truth value to be a binary feature and not a scalar feature. Second, in this thesis I am assuming that one cannot show that a premise is false by casting reasonable doubt on that premise: one has merely shown that it is doubtful (i.e., likely to be false).

one must do one of two things: either one must show that one of the premises of the argument is false, or one must cast reasonable doubt on one of the premises of the argument. In the case of the logical problem of evil the most prominent response has been to demonstrate that premise (5d) (or its equivalent ‘the crucial modal premise’) is false.

Most notably, Alvin Plantinga has attempted to rebut the logical problem of evil by demonstrating that (5b) is false.<sup>161</sup> He does this by demonstrating that the existence of God and the existence of evil are compossible. For, of course, if it is possible that God and evil co-exist, then it is not the case that necessarily, if evil exists then God does not exist. As David Lewis, speaking of Plantinga’s usage of the term ‘defence’ in the context of the logical argument from evil, notes,

‘Defence’...means just any hypothesis about why [an] omniscient, omnipotent, benevolent God permits evil. Its sole purpose is to rebut the contention that there is no possible way that such a thing could happen. To serve that purpose, the hypothesis need not be put forward as true. It need not be at all plausible. Mere possibility is enough (Lewis 1993a, 151).

In order to put forward a defence of this kind Plantinga described a possible world,  $w$ , at which the crucial modal premise and, in consequence (5b), is false; that is, he described a possible world at which God and evil co-exist. In particular, Plantinga described a possible world,  $w_1$ , at which God brings about the great good of the existence of human free will (said to be incompatible with divine predestination) and where this great good outweighs the existence of evil that follows from the existence of human free will. So, Plantinga argued, it is possible that evil exists and God exists because God wanted to achieve some greater good (i.e., the existence of human free will). So far so good. This defence, however, is only supposed to account for the existence of God and the existence of moral evil, for example, rape, genocide and child molestation. Natural evil (for example, earthquakes, famine and tsunamis) however, still needs to be accounted for. To do so Plantinga argued that it is possible that natural evil be attributed

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<sup>161</sup> See, for example, (Plantinga 1978, Ch. 9).

to Satan and his cohorts. Satan, so the traditional doctrine goes, is a mighty nonhuman spirit who, along with many other angels, was created long before God created man. Unlike most of his colleagues, Satan rebelled against God and has since been wreaking whatever havoc he can. The result is natural evil. So the natural evil we find is due to free actions of nonhuman spirits.  
(Plantinga 1974, 57)

This sums up Plantinga's defence against the logical problem of evil. To generalise we might describe this kind of defence as follows:

**Defence<sub>1</sub>:** To give a defence against a particular argument one can describe a possible world,  $w$ , at which the negation of the non-modal form of one of the modal premises of that argument is true.<sup>162</sup>

Take the crucial modal premise: necessarily, if evil exists then God (an omnipotent, omniscient and perfectly good being) does not exist. To give a defence of kind Defence<sub>1</sub> one can describe a possible world,  $w_1$ , at which it is not the case that if evil exists then God (an omnipotent, omniscient and perfectly good being) does not exist i.e., a possible world at which God and evil co-exist.

The aim of defences of this type is to demonstrate that one of the premises of an argument is false and thereby demonstrate that the argument, such as the above argument from the logical problem of evil, is unsound. Overall Plantinga's defence against the logical argument from evil has been judged a success. Indeed, one of the first proponents of the logical problem of evil, John Mackie, writes of Plantinga's argument:

[s]ince this defence is formally possible, and its principle involves no real abandonment of our ordinary view of the opposition between good and evil, we can concede that the problem of evil does not, after all, show that the central doctrines of theism are logically inconsistent with one another (J. L. Mackie 1982, 154).

Mackie continues, however, to assert that Plantingian-style defences (that is, defences of type Defence<sub>1</sub>) are strategically very weak, even if they are successful in the way

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<sup>162</sup> In particular, by 'modal premise' here I mean 'necessity-premise'. That is, a premise that asserts, 'necessarily,...'.

outlined: ‘whether this [defence] offers a real solution of the problem is another question’ (J. L. Mackie 1982, 154). One reason why this kind of defence might not offer a ‘real solution’ to the problem of evil is because showing that it is possible that God and evil co-exist (thereby showing that the crucial modal premise is false), does not show that it is *reasonable to believe* that God and evil could co-exist.

Indeed, many will argue that  $w_1$  may describe a metaphysically possible scenario at which God and evil co-exist, and that, in consequence, this makes it the case that the crucial modal premise of the argument from the logical problem of evil is false, but that it is not a scenario that is reasonable to believe *may be actual*. There are three reasons why this scenario may be taken to be one that it is not reasonable to believe may be actual. The first two are context-dependent. First, if one’s interlocutor is an atheist she will likely find the existence of ‘Satan and his cohorts’ wildly implausible. So, appealing to a defence by stating that there is a possible world at which the free actions of Satan and his cohorts are responsible for evil will be ineffective. Second, if one’s interlocutor is a theist she may well find the existence of free will (of the kind that is said to be incompatible with divine predestination) implausible. So, again, appealing to a defence by stating that there is a possible world at which the free actions of Satan and his cohorts are responsible for evil will be ineffective. Third, as van Inwagen notes,  $w_1$  may be metaphysically possible but, even at  $w_1$ , it could still be the case that God is able to bring about the greater good of human free will without allowing all the evils that we observe. In consequence,

[a]t the very least, a defence will have to include the proposition that God was *unable* to bring about the greater good without allowing the evils we observe (or some other evils as bad or worse). And to find a story that can plausibly be said to have this feature is no trivial undertaking (van Inwagen 2006, 68).

In consequence, Plantinga’s interlocutors will likely (and indeed did) change the argument slightly so as to outflank defences of type Defence<sub>1</sub>, making defences of type Defence<sub>1</sub>, in effect, redundant. To speak broadly, the key move made by proponents of the logical problem of evil was to change the argument. They argued that, while (1b)–(4b) may be compossible, it is not reasonable to believe that (1b)–(4b) are true in our world. In consequence, this argument cannot be resisted by merely describing some possible world at which God and evil co-exist. In order to resist this

argument one will have to describe a possible world that *might well be actual*. Call this argument ‘The argument from the problem of evil.’

### **The argument from the problem of evil**

- (1b) God is omnipotent.
- (2b) God is omniscient.
- (3b) God is perfectly good.
- (4b) Evil exists.
- (5b') It is unreasonable to believe propositions (1b)–(4b) at the same time.
- (6b') The theist that believes in the existence of evil believes propositions (1b)–(4b).

*Therefore,*

- (7b') The theist believes something that is unreasonable.

It is important to note that the line of reasoning that I have presented so far does not mean, however, that one need now give a *theodicy* rather than a defence. That is, one need not provide the *actual* reason(s) as to why God permits evil. One can still give a defence of sorts (i.e., give a *possible* reason as to why God permits evil). My argument does mean, however, that it is not the case that any possible reason as to why God permits evil will do. Rather, given the above argument, one needs to give a possible reason that it is reasonable to believe may well be actual.

Van Inwagen himself (2006) makes a similar point. Van Inwagen provides an example to demonstrate that describing *some* possible world at which the negation of one of the premises of an argument is false will not always do. Van Inwagen describes a scenario at which an attorney is defending Clarissa (a mother of two) from Aunt Harriet’s charge of child neglect due to Clarissa’s leaving her two children alone. Clarissa’s defence attorney describes a far-removed possible world at which Clarissa is innocent. Van Inwagen writes of this move on behalf of Clarissa that the possible world the defence puts forward,

may be a possibility—I suppose it *is* a possibility—but it is too remote a possibility to raise real doubts in anyone’s mind. What you’re trying to convince Aunt Harriet of (and the jury) is that there is, as we say, a *very real*

*possibility* that Clarissa had a good reason for leaving her children alone (van Inwagen 2006, 66).

The jury are not going to be convinced by the defence's putting forward a far-removed possible world to demonstrate Clarissa's innocence. Upon seeing the bemused faces of the jury Clarissa's defence attorney would, quite likely, very quickly realise her mistake and move on to describe a more plausible possibility.<sup>163</sup> Likewise, as van Inwagen notes,

[t]he debate [concerning the existence of God given the existence of evil] evolved fairly quickly out of this early, 'logical' stage into a discussion of a much more interesting question: whether the statement 'God and evil both exist' could be shown to be *probably false* or *unreasonable to believe* (van Inwagen 2006, 67).

Arguments concerning the existence of evil and the existence of God were thus developed that do not make use of the modal assertion, making defences of type Defence<sub>1</sub>, or similar, quickly redundant. In fact, van Inwagen laments the distinction between the 'logical' problem of evil and the 'so-called evidential (or probabilistic) problem of evil' (van Inwagen 2006, 67). He notes that, '[d]iscussions of the problem of evil even today tend to replicate this episode in the evolution of the discussion of the argument from evil...I find the distinction artificial and unhelpful' (van Inwagen 2006, 68). He finds it artificial and unhelpful, I take it, because, while Mackie's formulation of the argument was a 'logical' one, describing a remote possible world at which God and evil co-exist was never going to convince the proponent of the problem of evil.

Overall, I think that we can draw the following conclusion from the above discussion. A defence of type Defence<sub>1</sub> may be sufficient to demonstrate that the logical problem of evil is unsound. However, merely demonstrating that the negation of one of the modal premises of an argument is possibly true is, strategically, a very weak defensive move. One's interlocutor will not likely be swayed by one's providing some description of a far-removed possible world at which their claim is false. Modal arguments that have been refuted by appeal to defences of type Defence<sub>1</sub> will

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<sup>163</sup> Or, of course, perhaps it is more likely that she would not even make the move in the first place.

probably be replaced by non-modal arguments that cannot be refuted by appeal to a defence of type Defence<sub>1</sub>. One might as well take out both arguments in one fell swoop.

In order to have a sufficient defence against arguments like the argument from the problem of evil, therefore, one must (if one wants to go the route of providing a defence) show that it is possible that God and evil co-exist *and* the world that one describes to verify that it is possible that God and evil co-exist must be a world that is a ‘*very real possibility*’ (van Inwagen 2006, 66).<sup>164</sup>

There is, therefore, another, stronger, type of defence:

**Defence<sub>2</sub>** = To give a defence against a particular argument one can describe a close possible world, *w*, at which the negation of one of the premises is true (i.e., the premise might well be true of the world in which we live).

### **Materialist defences and the problems of life after death**

I will now assess materialist defences in response to the arguments from the problems of life after death. As previously mentioned, the argument that is most commonly dealt with in the literature on life after death is something like the argument from the logical problem of life after death.

### **The argument from the logical problem of life after death**

- (1) We are human organisms.
- (2) For any organism  $O_1$  at a time,  $t_1$ , and for any organism  $O_2$  at a time,  $t_2$ ,  $O_1$  and  $O_2$  are identical if and only if the simples that compose  $O_1$  and the simples that compose  $O_2$  are constituents of the same life.
- (3) We will die.
- (4) We will exist (after our deaths) on the Last Day.
- (5') The above propositions (1)–(4) form a logically inconsistent set.
- (6') It is unreasonable to believe a set of propositions that are logically inconsistent.

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<sup>164</sup> The question remains, then: when is it reasonable to believe that some world is possibly actual? I say ‘when the probability of *w*’s being actual, given the proposition one is trying to verify, *p*, and given our background knowledge, *k*, is sufficient for reasonable belief.’

(7') The animalist that believes that human organisms that have died can exist again on the Last Day believes propositions (1)–(4).

*Therefore,*

(8') It is unreasonable to believe that animalism is true and that human organisms that have died can exist again on the Last Day.

As previously mentioned, (1)–(4) do not directly form a logical contradiction; there is no syntactic contradiction to be found between propositions (1)–(4). Instead a contradiction has to be deduced from (1)–(4); that is, one must demonstrate that there is a semantic contradiction between (1)–(4). To remind you, I argued that (1)–(4) form a (semantic) contradiction if (A) and (B) are true. If it is the case that, (A) necessarily, when we die (3) our remains cease to be immanent-causally connected to any organism (call this physical dissolution) and, (B) necessarily, in order for us to exist again on the Last Day the simples that compose us (before our deaths) and the simples that compose us (after our deaths on the Last Day) need to be continuously immanent-causally connected (call this ‘material and causal continuity’)<sup>165</sup>, then it is impossible that a human organism that has died to exist again on the Last Day.

Van Inwagen expresses the challenge for materialist believers in the resurrection as follows,

‘physical dissolution’ and ‘material and causal continuity’ are hard to reconcile. To show how the continuity requirement can be satisfied, despite appearances—or else to show that the continuity requirement is illusory—is a problem that must be solved if a philosophically satisfactory ‘materialist’ theory of resurrection is to be devised. (van Inwagen 2015, 7)

Van Inwagen, and others, think that the requirement for material and causal continuity (or something very much like it) is not illusory. The remaining option, therefore, is to show how it is that this requirement can be satisfied despite appearances. Van Inwagen described a possible world at which (1)–(4) are true and, in consequence, demonstrated that (5') is false. Or, equivalently, he attempted to describe a possible

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<sup>165</sup> Remember this is van Inwagen’s thesis. This thesis is stronger than the causal-continuity requirement.

world at which his interlocutor's claim, that necessarily, if animalism is true then it is not the case that an organism that has died can exist again on the Last Day, is false. In order to do so, he put forward the simulacrum models. The simulacrum models were supposed to demonstrate that (A) was false and, in consequence, (5') was false. He writes that this story<sup>166</sup>

is best understood by considering the familiar distinction, familiar to students of the problem of evil, between a theodicy and a defense— *these terms being used in the senses that Plantinga has given them. The story I have told is analogous to a “defense,” not to a theodicy* (van Inwagen 2015, 9).<sup>167</sup>

That is, I take it, van Inwagen is arguing that he can provide a story that demonstrates that (5') is false. He writes, '[m]y method was to tell a story, a story I hoped my readers would grant was a metaphysically possible story, in which God accomplished the Resurrection of the Dead' (van Inwagen 1998b, 51).<sup>168</sup>

The question that remains now is: 'can this story feature as a part of a sufficient defence against the argument from the logical problem of life after death, given the above discussion?'. I think that the answer is, in one respect, 'yes.'<sup>169</sup> This is because the simulacrum stories are stories that can be used to demonstrate that premise (5') of the argument from the logical problem of life after death is false. Most of the discussion in the literature has concerned this problem.

Having said this I think we should reply, *a la* van Inwagen, that the time has come to move away from the 'logical' stage onto a discussion of a much more interesting question: whether the statement 'not even God can raise a human organism from the dead' 'could be shown to be *probably false* or *unreasonable to believe*' (van Inwagen 2006, 67). Van Inwagen may have demonstrated that it is not impossible for God to

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<sup>166</sup> He gives, I take it, one story that describes two models.

<sup>167</sup> Italics added by me.

<sup>168</sup> Above I have argued that van Inwagen should not take this story to establish a metaphysical possibility. I argued that given van Inwagen's modal scepticism he should be sceptical that this story establishes that the resurrection of human organisms from the dead is possible. Here, however, I am assuming that this story does express a metaphysical possibility. This has the added benefit that it will assist us in seeing that one need not be a modal sceptic in order to reject van Inwagen's argument.

<sup>169</sup> So long as one is not a modal sceptic.

raise human organisms from the dead, but what is left to be shown is that it is reasonable to believe that God can raise human organisms from the dead.

In the light of this fact we can simply amend the argument from the logical problem of life after death. The argument that I stated at the very beginning of Chapter 3 will do. This is an argument that cannot be responded to by way of appeal to a defence of type Defence<sub>1</sub>, that is, by way of describing a metaphysically possible world at which God removes for safe-keeping our freshly-dead corpses and replaces them with look-alikes.

- (1) We are human organisms.
- (2) For any organism  $O_1$  at a time,  $t_1$ , and for any organism  $O_2$  at a time,  $t_2$ ,  $O_1$  and  $O_2$  are identical if and only if the simples that compose  $O_1$  and the simples that compose  $O_2$  are constituents of the same life.
- (3) We will die.
- (4) We will exist (after our deaths) on the Last Day.
- (5) It is unreasonable to believe propositions (1)–(4) at the same time.
- (6) The animalist that wants to believe that human organisms that have died can exist again on the Last Day believes propositions (1)–(4).

*Therefore,*

- (7) It is unreasonable to believe that animalism is true and that human organisms that have died can exist again on the Last Day

It is, I hope, clear from what has been said above that, in response to the more general argument from the problem of life after death, a defence of type Defence<sub>1</sub> will not do; the argument from the problem of life after death does not assert that it is impossible for a human organism that has died to exist again on the Last Day. It is, I hope, also clear from what has been said above that  $w'$  may describe a possibility but it does not describe a possibility that *may well be true*. I think van Inwagen would agree. As van Inwagen notes,

I am inclined now to think of the description that I gave in ‘The Possibility of Resurrection’ of how an omnipotent being could accomplish the Resurrection

of the Dead [i.e., the simulacrum story] as a ‘just-so story’: Although it serves to establish a possibility, it probably isn’t true (van Inwagen 1998b, 51).

Van Inwagen does not tell us, precisely, why he thinks that his description of a world at which God raises an organism from the dead is probably is not true, but the reasons are not hard to fathom. Put simply, the evidence strongly suggests that when human organisms die the vast majority of them are, in fact, subject to the normal processes of biological decay, decomposing in the grave, being incinerated at the crematorium, being blown to bits by a bomb or subject to some such disruptive forces.

As mentioned above, however, ‘reasonable to believe’ is, to some extent, context-sensitive. Any context, however, in which van Inwagen gives his defence of the possibility of resurrection is not one in which one can afford to give far-removed descriptions. If van Inwagen takes himself to be providing an apologetic (i.e., a response to those who say that there is no actual resurrection (because materialism is true)) then his just-so story is not likely to be taken seriously.<sup>170</sup> Moreover, if van Inwagen takes himself to be answering those people who are saying that materialism is actually false (because life after death is true) such as, for example, Christian substance dualists, then his just-so story is, again, not likely to be taken seriously.

In consequence, while van Inwagen may have established that it is metaphysically possible for God to raise human organisms from the dead he has not established that it is reasonable to believe that God can raise human organisms from the dead. But this is what’s needed. Assuming that Scripture underdetermines which view about what we are is true, and assuming that there are no good arguments (independent of any theological or biblical considerations) for materialism or, at least, against substance dualism, then the debate will be won or lost on the above argument. I hope to have put the ball in the materialist’s court. Consider the following statement from van Inwagen: ‘dualism seems to me to be an unnecessarily complicated theory about my nature—unless there is some fact or phenomenon or aspect of the world that dualism deals with better than materialism’ (van Inwagen 1995, 476). The fact or phenomenon that dualism deals with better than materialism is life after death. If van Inwagen is

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<sup>170</sup> Indeed, when I was presenting a version of this material to my Department a senior member could not keep himself from laughing out loud as I recited van Inwagen’s just-so story. I took this to be an expression of his agreement that this story is not sufficient to cast reasonable doubt on (5).

happy to admit that dualism is just as likely to be true as materialism prior to considerations about life after death, then the fact that we will survive our deaths seems to tip the argument in favour of substance dualism: it is best explained on a dualist account of what we are.

The same can be said of Zimmerman's account of life after death too. Zimmerman may have established that it is metaphysically possible for God to raise human organisms from the dead but he has not established that it is reasonable to believe that God can raise human organisms from the dead. As Zimmerman notes, having put forward his model,

Were I a materialist arguing for the possibility of survival...I would want to conclude the telling of such tales with van Inwagen's qualifications:

My method was to tell a story, a story I hoped my readers would grant was a metaphysically possible story, in which God accomplished the Resurrection of the Dead...[T]here may well be other ways in which an omnipotent being could accomplish the Resurrection of the Dead than the way that was described in the story I told, ways I am unable to even form an idea of because I lack the conceptual resources to do so.

These are, after all, 'just-so stories' (Zimmerman 2013, 145).

The falling-elevator model is, in this respect, no better than the simulacrum models.<sup>171</sup> Zimmerman admits that the falling-elevator model is merely a 'just-so story'. Just-so stories are not supposed to be taken to express very real possibilities; that is, they are not supposed to be stories that describe how the actual world might actually happen to be.

What then of the other models surveyed in this thesis? What then of the recomposition model and the miraculous-event model? As mentioned, both the recomposition model and the miraculous-event models describe logically possible states of affairs. The question remains: is it reasonable to believe that these logically possible states of affairs may well be actual? I think that the answer is 'no'. The

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<sup>171</sup> There are certain respects in which the falling-elevator model is better than the simulacrum model. Most notably, it does not require that God 'deceive' anyone to achieve his purposes.

recomposition model may *prima facie* be the most reasonable story<sup>172</sup> but the materialist animalist will not be likely to accept, and should not accept, the recomposition model as a plausible defence, since the recomposition model commits one to the denial of the ‘only *x* and *y*’ principle. Similar considerations pertain to the miraculous-event model. The miraculous-event model may describe a metaphysically possible state of affairs, but if one accepts the miraculous-event model then one has to accept that lives are events that can begin again. The animalists that I have surveyed so far will not be likely to accept that lives are events that can begin again and, I think, are justified in asking for an analogy that takes into account the fact that lives are events of a specific kind: natural processes.

### **9.2 The falling-elevator model and the constitution view**

So far I have merely considered animalist accounts of what we are. A version of the argument that has been made above, however, can also be applied to other materialist theories of the human person besides animalist theories. Although van Inwagen’s materialism provides the context into which I have placed the problem of life after death, I think that the arguments from the problem of life after death could be deployed against other materialist theories so long as they give ‘pride of place to a causal element in criteria of identity over time’ (Zimmerman 1999, 197). This is because any materialist account that gives pride of place to a causal element in criteria of identity over time will be likely to need a story (such as the falling-elevator model or the simulacrum model) to justify the assertion that it is possible for God to resurrect human organisms from the dead.

As I mentioned earlier, animalists claim that a human person is a human organism. The ‘is’ in the previous sentence, on animalism, is the ‘is’ of identity. There is a view, however, in the near vicinity of animalism that says that a human person is a human organism, but that the ‘is’ here is the ‘is’ of constitution. As mentioned earlier, Sydney Shoemaker holds that ‘a person “is” an animal, not in the sense of being identical to one, but in the sense of sharing matter with one’ (Shoemaker 1984, 113). This view is known as ‘the constitution view’. Some advocates of the constitution view also face the problem of life after death. This is because, while those that hold the constitution view think that for a person at one time to be identical with a person

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<sup>172</sup> It is the model that most appeal to when first presented with the problem of life after death.

at another time those persons need to ‘share the same first-person perspective’, they still think (so as to avoid duplication objections) that human first-person perspectives are necessarily embodied.<sup>173</sup> In this case, even if one does not identify a human person with a human organism but with a particular first-person perspective, one still needs immanent-causal connections between two organisms at two different times in order for them to be considered identical.

In consequence, some advocates of the constitution view appeal to the falling-elevator model: it is a possible world at which a human organism dies but at which immanent-causal continuity is maintained.<sup>174</sup> A version of the above argument can, therefore, apply equally well to them.

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<sup>173</sup> Loose (2012) makes this point. Loose notes that Kevin Corcoran (a Christian that holds to the constitution view) requires ‘an explanation of how a particular body could persist through death’ (Loose 2012, 441).

<sup>174</sup> See (Corcoran 2001a).

## CHAPTER 10 – THE KERNEL

Perhaps we can help van Inwagen. Perhaps we can describe a possible world that it is reasonable to believe may well be actual at which life after death is possible, given animalism. As mentioned, to a certain extent reasonableness is context-sensitive.

While the atheist may think that it is unreasonable to believe that the possible world at which Satan and his cohorts are the cause of natural evil may well be actual, the theist may not. The theist, after all, may already believe in the existence of Satan and his cohorts. The context that this thesis concerns is that of the debate between Christian substance dualists and Christian materialists. Certain facts may, therefore, be assumed in this context that cannot be assumed elsewhere. It may be assumed, for example, that the Bible provides us with various explanations or analogues of, say, the ways in which God acts.

Van Inwagen, for example, appeals to a certain passage in 1 Corinthians 15 in part to justify his belief in the resurrection given animalism. In this passage Paul says:

But someone will ask, ‘How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?’ How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else.

Van Inwagen writes of his belief in the resurrection of the dead,

[m]y inclination is to believe that God will somehow—in the way I have imagined or in some way I lack the conceptual resources to image, ‘in this way or some other’—preserve a remnant of each person, a *gumnos kókkos* (a naked kernel: 1 Cor. 15:37), which will be sown in corruption and raised in incorruption’ (van Inwagen 1998b, 51).

One wonders if the continuity that Paul was trying to describe here really was one of *material and causal* continuity. The historical, contextual and textual debate concerning how this verse should be read is still raging. I will not enter this debate here, but here are some of the options. First, the materialist may argue that the ‘kernel’ here is to be understood as a material part of a person (as van Inwagen does). Second, the dualist may argue that the ‘kernel’ here could be understood as an

immaterial part.<sup>175</sup> Third, the materialist or dualist may argue that the point of the analogy here is not an expression of the fact that there will be a continuing part of a person, but, rather, the analogy expresses the idea that there will be some kind of continuity between earthly and resurrection bodies, but not necessarily a substantial continuity, perhaps, qualitative identity or numerical identity of some unknown sort. Let us concede for the sake of argument, however, that Paul's reference to a naked kernel could, in some sense, refer to a material part.

Here van Inwagen is interpreting verse 37 quite literally. When God, as it were, sows the earth ready for the day of resurrection he does not plant the whole organism but just a small portion of the organism. I take it that van Inwagen is arguing that there is a biblical precedent for belief in the continuous material and causal continuity between a person that has died and a person that exists again on the Last Day; just as a seed that is planted in the ground will grow into a plant, so a portion of a person may be sufficient for it to survive its death.

Van Inwagen says that this version of his story is preferable to the version where God preserves the whole corpse. The reason is that it turns back the argument that his model (bodily-remains simulacrum model) would make 'nonsense of the Pauline principle that a corpse is a temple of the Holy Spirit' (van Inwagen 2015, 9). The argument proceeds as follows: if we knew the truth that God replaces our loved ones with look-alikes there would be no reason to treat corpses with dignity. But we do rightly treat corpses with dignity and, in consequence, we should reject van Inwagen's model. To get around this argument van Inwagen says that if God merely removes a special personal-identity-bearing part of a person then we should still treat 'corpses with reverence, and properly so' (van Inwagen 2015, 9). Just as it is the case that when the undertaker has removed much larger parts of corpses we treat them with dignity so when God removes a very small identity-bearing part of them we should treat them with dignity.

When van Inwagen first put forward this suggestion he need not have provided us with a description of this remnant, naked kernel or portion. The notion of a naked kernel or portion was, as it were, a variable. The ontological nature of this kernel, so

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<sup>175</sup> See (Cooper 1989, 140–141) for a defence of a dualist reading of this passage and (Green 2008, 177–178) for a materialist gloss on this passage.

van Inwagen might have claimed, was unknown. He was merely claiming that there was biblical precedent for *some kind of* material and causal continuity. He need not, therefore, have given a description of the ontological nature of the kernel because he took himself to have established the possibility of the resurrection of material beings in some other way; namely, by appeal to the bodily-remains simulacrum model.

The picture is now, however, somewhat different. First, since van Inwagen has not established the possibility of the resurrection (given his modal scepticism) he now needs to explain how it is that the resurrection is metaphysically possible given animalism. Second, in the light of the more general argument from the problem of life after death, van Inwagen needs to explain how it is that the resurrection is metaphysically possible and the world that he describes in order to justify his claim that the resurrection is metaphysically possible needs to be one that it is reasonable to believe may well be actual. On the assumption that 1 Corinthians 15:37 describes some kind of material and causal continuity between an organism that has died and an organism that will be raised from the dead, describing a world at which this is the mechanism that God uses will lend credibility to the animalist's position. As it stands, however, the suggestion is ontologically non-committal. Van Inwagen has not told us anything about the ontological nature of the kernel.

This is problematic. Put simply, for the suggestion that God preserves a remnant of each person to feature in an argument in support of the very real possibility of the resurrection, it needs to be a suggestion of which his readers can conceive. Van Inwagen, though, has not yet offered any description of what this kernel is that continues to exist between my death and resurrection in a way that would enable us to assess the suggestion's very real possibility or even metaphysical possibility. The 'kernel,' we might think, is a variable; it stands in place of several descriptions by which God could ensure the persistence of a human organism across death. In consequence, I will now delineate what I take to be all of the possible descriptions of this kernel (given animalism) and raise some problems with each one. I will argue that each possible description is no better than van Inwagen's simulacrum model.

There are several options open to van Inwagen that I can think of. These models can be divided into those that rely upon MD2 suspension<sup>176</sup> and those that require the continuation of a life. I begin with those that rely upon MD2 suspension.

## **10.1 Suspension models**

### **10.1.1 The suspended life of a portion of simples**

There is one attempt that I have found in the literature to describe what the ‘kernel’ is that van Inwagen appeals to. As mentioned, in his paper ‘Mind, Mortality and Material Being’ (Anders 2011) Anders puts forward a description of what might happen to a human organism upon death and a related definition of a kernel that might ensure the persistence of a particular human organism across death. I will briefly restate Anders’ suggestion. Anders argues that at the moment of one’s death God suspends one’s life processes and the ‘organisational structure’ (Anders 2011, 34) of one’s life processes gets ‘compacted’ (Anders 2011, 34) (i.e., the organism comes to be composed by a small portion of the simples that last composed it and these simples stand in the same spatial and chemical arrangement in which they previously stood). For God to resurrect a particular human organism God need only place this kernel into a collection of simples arranged humanwise and restart the suspended life of this kernel for the organism that has died to come back to life again. This portion of the simples that constitute this suspended life need to be simples that recently composed the brain or the organism that died.

I have argued, however, that this view is incompatible with van Inwagen’s metaphysics.<sup>177</sup> Put simply, the inconsistency is this: the compaction model supposes that a kernel (as described by Anders) could sustain a suspended life but, it seems, van Inwagen would reject this supposition. That is, the suspended life that exists in virtue of a kernel (as described by Anders) cannot be restarted in the way that a suspended life that exists in virtue of a corpse can (the only example of suspension that van Inwagen gives). Anders’ kernel does not, therefore, really sustain a suspended life (as he supposes), but, rather, is merely a collection of simples. I argued that ‘a life that has been suspended can begin again, if and only if, the requisite energy is supplied to

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<sup>176</sup> To remind you (MD2) Suspension =  $O$ ’s life has been suspended at  $t$  if the life,  $L$ , in virtue of which the simples that composed  $O$  has ceased and the simples that were caught up in  $L$  retain—owing to the mere absence of disruptive forces—their individual properties and their relations to one another.

<sup>177</sup> Both earlier in this thesis (subsection 6.1.2) and in Atkinson (2015).

the simples whose large-scale activity has been suspended’ (Atkinson 2015, 589). A small portion of simples is not disposed for life.

### 10.1.2 Suspended life of a corpse

It is consistent with what van Inwagen writes, however, that the kernel need not be *a small part* of a corpse but could be a corpse that has had its life suspended and has not undergone any significant large-scale physical change. Van Inwagen writes that, ‘[m]y inclination is to believe that God will somehow—in the way I have imagined or in some way I lack the conceptual resources to imagine, “*in this way* or some other”—preserve a remnant of each person, a *gumnos kókkos* (van Inwagen 1998b, 51).<sup>178</sup> By ‘in this way’ I take van Inwagen to be referring to the bodily-remains simulacrum model. Perhaps the kernel is, therefore, a whole living-corpse or at least a very large part of the whole living corpse; an object that is disposed to have its suspended life begin again on supply of the requisite amount of energy.

This description of a kernel, however, is no better than van Inwagen’s initial suggestion. This is because, if (as it appears) human organisms die by disruption, God would still be in the business of, at the moment of death, suspending our lives, removing our corpses, and replacing us with replicas which are burnt in a crematorium or placed in the ground to rot.

### 10.2 Non-suspension models

Consequently, it seems that models that involve suspension cannot help van Inwagen. They are either inconsistent with van Inwagen’s metaphysics or no better than the original story he put forward in ‘Possibility of Resurrection’. In fact, given what I have said above, the following disjunction seems true: either a portion of simples is too small, so that it is not disposed for life on the supply of the requisite amount of energy, or it is too large for God to sustain without God’s being required to place a look-alike in the ground.

The question now becomes ‘are there any models that do not require suspension that van Inwagen can accept?’. The answer *prima facie* seems to be ‘no’, for a number of reasons. First, any human organism, or sufficiently large portion thereof that

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<sup>178</sup> Italics added by me.

continues the life of the organism, will have to be removed for safekeeping by God and replaced with a simulacrum. After all, it appears to us that our loved ones really do die. In consequence, these models would appear to be no better than the simulacrum models described by van Inwagen. Second, van Inwagen admits that all who share in the sin of Adam must die. But, so it seems, there are only two ways by which an organism can die. Discounting suspension models leaves models at which those who die by MD1 disruption and, as has been defended in this thesis, it is not reasonable to believe that a man who has been burned to ashes or been eaten by worms (has had his life disrupted) should ever live again given animalism.

### **10.3 A final worry: organisms and organs of maintenance**

A final worry remains, however. The worry is that we may have been looking in the wrong place for an account of the resurrection at which God preserves a remnant of each person and that remnant must be, at least in part, an organ of maintenance: namely, the brainstem. The problem is, so I am told (cf. Shewmon 2001), that the organ of maintenance cannot be reduced to a single ‘localized’ (van Inwagen 1990, 191) part of the human organism. This can be demonstrated by pointing out, as Alan Shewmon (2001) notes, that there are biological activities essential for life that continue when the brain has died. These activities include: maintenance of body temperature, fighting infections and foreign bodies, wound healing, sexual maturation, gestation of a foetus, the absorption of oxygen from the blood (needed for respiration), the breakdown of food into elemental forms and (in the case of a child) proportional growth, to name but a few (cf. Shewmon 2001, 468–471). Shewmon concludes that ‘[s]omatic integration is not localized to any single “critical” organ but is a holistic phenomenon involving the mutual interactions of all the parts’ (Shewmon 2001, 473). Olson seems to agree: he writes, ‘there can be a human life without an organ of maintenance. It won’t be a healthy life, but it is still the life of an animal. The activities required for there to be a living human organism need no central direction’ (Olson 2016, 298).

What should we conclude from this? We can conclude that there is no privileged part of the human organism that is somehow responsible for our survival and so needs to be preserved by God upon death for future resurrection; the brain is not needed for the

life of a human organism to persist. *Contra* previous thought on the matter Olson writes,

[s]uppose my brain were removed from my head and provided with the best-possible inorganic life-support machinery. Shewmon appears to have shown that in the right circumstances, the headless remainder would be a living human animal, since a human life needs no central direction. In that case it seems natural to assume that this animal would be me, the organism from which the brain was removed. (Olson 2016, 299)

This leaves us with the question: ‘what if the detached brain would be an organism?’ (Olson 2016, 300). Let us assume that it is. After all, we have not attained any new information about the brain that rules out its being able to function if isolated from a body and connected to an elaborate life-support machine as we have been supposing. In this case, upon my death God could preserve either my brain or my body and either one would be sufficient for my persistence, so long as the brain and/or the body can support the relevant aspects of a human life.

Say I suffered a terrible accident and died. Let us say, God, in this scenario, very soon after my death, preserves my brain, ‘which will continue to exist throughout the interval between my death and my resurrection and will, at the general resurrection, be clothed in a festal garment of new flesh’(van Inwagen 1995, 487). Given what we now know—that there is no organ of maintenance—it is also the case that He could have preserved my brainless body. He need not have preserved my brain. Moreover, He could have preserved both. He could, on the day of resurrection, give my preserved body a new brain and give my preserved brain a new body. If both my brain and my body’s life processes continue, then, on the Last Day, it is possible that there are two organisms that are both equal candidates for identification with me and can stand side by side and utter ‘I am Thom Atkinson’. Which one would be Thom Atkinson? Van Inwagen would argue, so it seems, ‘neither or both, it would seem, and, since not both, neither’ (van Inwagen 1995, 486). Why could I not be both? I

should not be both because it is logically impossible for a concrete object (namely me) to be wholly in two different places at once.<sup>179</sup>

Now one may respond by arguing, ‘God would not do that’. I respond, *a la van Inwagen*, I daresay He would not. But if He were to keep, say, just my brain for resurrection, the resulting person would be me. But, he would be me, in this case, as in the reassembly case, only because God had not also kept my body for safe-keeping. My post-mortem identity, in this case, would depend on what might happen to some atoms other than the atoms that compose me. As van Inwagen notes, this result is ‘absurd, it is utterly incoherent’(van Inwagen 1995, 487).

In consequence, van Inwagen’s suggestion that God could preserve a remnant of each person is no better than his suggestion that God could reassemble me from the atoms that composed me moments before my death. The kernel solution to the problem of the survival of death seems to entail the same absurdity as the reassembly solution to the problem of the survival of death; post-mortem identity will depend on what might happen to some atoms other than the atoms that compose me. This is, of course, only true if the detached brain would be an organism; perhaps the animalist should now deny that this is the case.

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<sup>179</sup> One may object by arguing, ‘in this scenario you are not *wholly* in two places at once. You may only *partly* be in two places at once. Maybe you are partly here and partly there, just as a drum kit may be partly here (where the bass drum is) and partly there (where the crash cymbal is).’ That may be so for drum kits but it is not, so, according to van Inwagen, for organisms. Van Inwagen asserts, I think quite plausibly, the following principle: ‘[i]f the activity of the *x*s constitutes a life, then none of the *x*s is causally isolated from the others’ (van Inwagen 1990, 151). This is true of all of the simples that compose organisms in general, but not true of the all of the simples that (virtually) compose a drum kit. All of the simples that compose an organism are in some way causally related to one another. Given this principle if one is to be partly located in two significantly different places, then the activity of the simples that compose one would need to be causally related. But this would surely not be the case when, for example, a surgeon removes a brain from a body. Were a surgeon to separate my brain from my body she would be severing any causal relationship between my brain and my body. This is certainly true of liver or kidney transplant operations. When the surgeon cuts the liver away from a particular body it ceases to be causally related to the body from which it came.

## CHAPTER 11 – CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have argued that it is unreasonable to believe that the following propositions are true simultaneously:

- (1) We are human organisms.
- (2) For any organism  $O_1$  at a time,  $t_1$ , and for any organism  $O_2$  at a time,  $t_2$ ,  $O_1$  and  $O_2$  are identical if and only if the simples that compose  $O_1$  and the simples that compose  $O_2$  are constituents of the same life.
- (3) We will die.
- (4) We will exist (after our deaths) on the Last Day.

I argued for this thesis as follows. First, I demonstrated why, in the past, it has been argued that it is unreasonable to believe that (1)–(4) are true simultaneously. It has been argued that it is unreasonable to believe that (1)–(4) are true simultaneously because propositions (A) and (B) are, supposedly, true.

- (A) Necessarily, the life of an organism,  $O_1$ , at one time,  $t_1$ , is identical with the life of an organism,  $O_2$ , at another time,  $t_2$ , if and only if, the simples that compose  $O_1$  and the simples that compose  $O_2$  are immanent-causally connected.

and

- (B) Necessarily, when we die the simples that last composed us will cease to bear any immanent-causal connection to any organism.

Second, however, I demonstrated that (A) and (B) are false. (A) and (B) are false, I have argued, because there are possible worlds at which not-(a) and not-(b) are true.

Third, I argued that while (A) and (B) may be false their non-modal forms (a) and (b) are highly plausible. If one rejects (a) then one has to, for example, reject the ‘only  $x$  and  $y$ ’ principle. If one rejects (b) then one has to, for example, deny an obvious truth: our remains will rot or will be burned. In the light of this, I argued that while it is not impossible (provided modal scepticism is false) for an organism that has died to exist again on the Last Day, it is still unreasonable to believe that an organism that has died can exist again on the Last Day.

I then argued that it is the task of the Christian materialist to demonstrate that this is not the case. Indeed, van Inwagen's argument, as it stands, will probably not satisfy either the atheist who argues that there is no actual resurrection (because materialism is true) or the Christian substance dualist who argues that materialism is actually false (because life after death is true). This is not because the atheist and the Christian are modal sceptics. Rather, it is because they have good reasons to doubt that van Inwagen's suggestion may well be actual, and so have good reasons to doubt that the resurrection of material beings is a feat the almighty being *may well achieve*.

Overall, I hope to have moved the argument concerning the possibility of life after death given animalism away from its early 'logical' stage on to the, much more interesting, 'plausibility' stage. I say the 'much more interesting' plausibility stage because, of course, this is the charge that Christians substance dualists will likely bring against the Christian materialist. Although it may be possible for an organism that has died to exist again on the Last Day it is still not reasonable to believe that an organism that has died can exist again on the Last Day.

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