

## 1. OVERVIEW OF SWINBURNE'S POSITION

**Independence Thesis:** Personal identity is independent of bodily, brain, and psychological continuity; i.e., psychological and brain continuity are neither (jointly or individually) necessary nor sufficient for personal identity

**Dualism:** A person is composed of a physical body, which is only accidentally part of the person, and a non-physical soul, which is essential to the person

## 2. THE ARGUMENT FOR INDEPENDENCE

- (i) Brain, bodily, and psychological continuity are neither individually nor jointly sufficient for personal identity (from the duplication arguments)
- (ii) It's conceivable that a person acquire a totally new body (pp. 327-328)
- (iii) It's conceivable that a person become disembodied (p. 328)
- (iv) It's conceivable that a person continue to exist with no apparent memories of earlier doings (p. 328)
- (v) It's conceivable that a person acquire a totally new body but have no apparent memories of earlier doings (p. 328)
- (vi) If (ii), (iii), (iv), and (v) are true, then it is possible that a person do the things in question
- (vii) If it is possible that a person do these things, and if (i) is true, then the Independence Thesis is true
- (viii) Therefore, the Independence Thesis is true.

(a) Sufficiency

(b) Acquiring a new body

(c) Disembodied existence

(d) Existing without memories

Quite clearly, we do allow not merely the logical possibility, but the frequent actuality of amnesia — a person forgetting all or certain stretches of his past life. (Swinburne, p. 328)

(e) Existing without memories *and* with an entirely new body

... many religions have taken seriously stories of persons passing through the waters of Lethe (a river whose waters made a person forget all his previous life) and then acquiring a new body. (Shoemaker and Swinburne, *Personal Identity*, p. 25.)

Those who hope to survive their death, despite the destruction of their body, will not necessarily be disturbed if they come to believe that they will then have no memory of their past life on Earth; they may just want to survive and have no interest in continuing to recall life on Earth. Again, apparently, there seems to be no contradiction involved in their belief. (Swinburne, p. 328)

(f) Conceivability and possibility

Admittedly, there may be stories or beliefs which involve a hidden contradiction when initially they do not seem to do so. But the fact that there seems (and to so many people) to be no contradiction hidden in these stories is good reason for supposing that there is no contradiction hidden in them — until a contradiction is revealed. If this were not a good reason for believing there to be no contradiction, we would have no good reason for believing any sentence at all to be free of hidden contradiction. (Swinburne, pp. 328-329)

(g) The final premise

(h) Evaluating the argument for Independence

*Examples of conceivable impossibilities:*

- a regular 17-sided polyhedron
- a barber who shaves all and only those people who don't shave themselves
- according to some: a permissible lie
- according to Swinburne: a person who survives without a soul

We *clearly and distinctly* conceive of something when we can visualize it or otherwise imagine it in such perfect detail so as to definitively remove any possibility of a hidden contradiction

### 3. FROM INDEPENDENCE TO DUALISM

#### (a) Aristotle revisited

What makes a substance the same substance as an earlier substance is that its matter is the same, or obtained from the matter of the former substance by gradual replacement, while continuing to possess the essential properties which constitute its form. (Swinburne, pp. 318-319)

**Revised Aristotelian Theory:** What makes a substance the same substance as an earlier substance is that *the “stuff” from which it is made* (whether this is material or immaterial stuff) is the same, or obtained from the stuff of the former substance by gradual replacement, while continuing to possess the essential properties which constitute its form

#### (b) Indivisibility

Swinburne says: matter can always be divided. But that’s because it’s extended. There is no such argument for souls. Therefore, there’s no obstacle to saying that souls are indivisible.

*Objections:*

- Matter isn’t all extended.
- Soul stuff may be in some sense extended.
- If souls are indivisible, how can they have mental properties?
- What’s at stake? The solution to the duplication problem.

#### (c) Swinburne’s argument for souls

- (i) Necessarily: if I continue to exist without any of the same physical stuff as my previous self, then I must have a soul (Aristotle)
- (ii) Possibly, I continue to exist but without any of the same physical stuff as my previous self (Descartes)
- (iii) Therefore, I have a soul

*A parallel argument:*

- (i) Necessarily: if a thing is a bachelor, then it is unmarried
- (ii) Possibly: Bill Clinton is a bachelor
- (iii) Therefore, Bill Clinton is unmarried

(d) Identity vs. Parthood

**Dualism:** Persons are composed of a physical body, which is only accidentally part of the person, and a non-physical soul, which is essential to the person.

(e) Dualism and Immortality

#### 4. OBJECTIONS TO DUALISM

(a) The epistemological objection

- (i) If Dualism is true, then we have no knowledge of personal identity
- (ii) But we *do* have some knowledge of personal identity
- (iii) Therefore, Dualism is false

(b) The traditional problem of skepticism

**Idealism:** Reality is entirely mental

**Realism:** A large part of reality is non-mental. This part would be exactly as it actually is if there were no minds.

- (i) If Realism is true, then we have no knowledge of the external world
- (ii) But we *do* have some knowledge of the external world
- (iii) Therefore, Realism is false

(c) The problem of interaction

Soul theorists must account for causal interaction between souls and physical objects, despite the fact that souls lack the physical properties involved in familiar causal interactions

(d) Souls are gratuitous