

THOMAS MARSCHLER

University of Augsburg

Godehard Brüntrup, Matthias Rugel, and Maria Schwartz (eds.), *Auferstehung des Leibes – Unsterblichkeit der Seele* [Resurrection of the Body – Immortality of the Soul], Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2010.

Perhaps there are two main factors which complicate the reception of analytic philosophy of religion and analytic theology in the German speaking academic world: the lack of translations of key texts and a certain separation between recent work in analytic philosophy of religion and conventional theological discussions. With the present volume, the editors intend to bring together the different perspectives with regard to an important doctrine of Christian faith, the expectation of eternal life and the resurrection of the dead. The book gathers thirteen essays many of which have been previously published (mostly in English), “striving with existential seriousness for a reasonable understanding of our hope for resurrection”.

It starts with three well known theological treatises that have already received great interest during the last decades and are still to be regarded as reference texts in the field of eschatology. More than half a century ago, Oscar Cullmann argued for a radical distinction between the biblical concept of resurrection and the Greek doctrine of the immortality of the soul (“Unsterblichkeit der Seele oder Auferstehung der Toten?”, 13-24). In Cullmann’s salvation-historical perspective, there is no intermediary state between the death of man at the end of his earthly life and his resurrection with body and soul at the end of time. As Gisbert Greshake correctly points out (“Das Verhältnis ‘Unsterblichkeit der Seele’ und ‘Auferstehung des Leibes’ in problemgeschichtlicher Sicht”, 25-42), the enormous success of this critical comparison within Protestant theology in the twentieth century results from its close relationship to one of the central issues in Dialectical Theology: While liberal Protestantism in the nineteenth century had limited eschatological expectations to the mere survival of the individual soul, for recent theologians the slogan “resurrection instead of immortality” is a consequence of the Lutheran doctrine of justification, in which man as a sinner, impotent to save himself, is rescued from death only by the grace and power of God.

Greshake's essay shows that many Catholic theologians have also been inspired by the challenges of Protestant thinkers to realize more clearly the problems associated with the traditional assumption of a bodiless soul surviving death and to abandon far-reaching philosophical speculation on eternal life in favor of purely theological arguments. Nevertheless, Greshake, like most Catholic scholars, tries to avoid the consequence that there may be a gap in human existence between death and resurrection. The solution he offers is a "Resurrection in Death" theory, in which a disembodied intermediate state is replaced by an immediate transformation of man into a non-material bodily existence in the moment of death. Has the concept of "soul" therefore become superfluous? Gerd Haeffner reminds us that there are still valuable philosophical arguments to defend "something indestructible in man" that is required to guarantee personal identity even after death („Vom Unzerstörbaren im Menschen: Versuch einer philosophischen Annäherung an ein problematisch gewordenes Theologumenon“, 43-58). Haeffner discusses the most important arguments from practical philosophy as well as from metaphysics and distinguishes his results from widespread misconceptions about the nature of soul. Thomas Schärfl classifies the basic models for understanding resurrection in the current scholarly debates with particular reference to the problem of self-identity and persistence much discussed by recent analytic philosophers („Was heißt ‚Auferstehung des Leibes‘?“, 59-80). Since Schärfl himself is arguing for a model of the embodied person's transformation in death, his paper can be regarded as philosophical support of Greshake's arguments. Two positions equally criticized by Schärfl are developed in the following papers. Eleonore Stump, a major representative of analytical Thomism, defends the possibility of a bodiless survival of death and the expectation of the restitution of the body at resurrection day („Auferstehung, Wiederaussetzung und Rekonstitution: Thomas von Aquin über die Seele“, 81-100). Resurrection therefore is to be considered as reconstitution of metaphysical parts. In opposition to these considerations substance dualism is strongly rejected by Christian materialists that play a considerable part in today's English speaking philosophy of religion, deeply influenced by the materialist monism of modern science and its consequences for the philosophy of mind. In Continental theology, Christian materialists are still rare, but in

the present volume their arguments have been taken into serious account. Peter van Inwagen reminds us that any Christian who refuses dualism for philosophical reasons, cannot only refer to the bible but also retains the ability to defend his hope for resurrection („Dualismus und Materialismus: Athen und Jerusalem?“, 101-116). Van Inwagen himself is the author of a much debated proposal that has been taken up by Dean Zimmerman („Die Kompatibilität von Materialismus und Überleben: Das Modell des ‚Fallenden Aufzugs‘“, 117-138). In the moment of biological death God may enable the survival of a human being replacing his body (or an essential part of it) by the corpse in a miracle that is empirically not verifiable. Man would be preserved in another world in a way that allows his resurrection on Judgment Day. In Zimmerman’s paper, Van Inwagen’s “Body Snatching” view has received some modification still on the basis of its materialist premises. In connection with a physicalist theory of human persistence, in which spatiotemporal continuity of the body is a necessary condition, it may be conceivable that in the moment of death God enables the simples which compose the body to fission into two nearest followers. The body of the dying person would be causally related without a gap in existence to the corpse remaining on earth as well as to a new “resurrection body” in heaven. Personal identity in this view depends on immanent-causal connections between all stages of bodily human existence, but not on the identity of material elements. To Alvin Plantinga, Zimmerman’s suggestion sounds a little bit “fantastic” („Materialismus und christlicher Glaube“, 139-164). In his view, the problems Christian materialists have with explaining central doctrines of faith can serve as an important argument for accepting a dualist position. In philosophy of mind, “emergentism” has been presented as a middle way between (materialistic) monism and traditional dualism. According to William Hasker („Emergenter Dualismus und Auferstehung“, 165-187), its chief concern is to describe human mind, in conformity with natural science, as result of the brain. It “emerges” when the necessary material constituents are given under certain complex circumstances. But unlike materialistic materialism, emergentism does not claim to explain consciousness and other characteristics of the mind on the basis of material properties. Although this theory cannot offer any evidence for human survival after death, it affirms the logical possibility that God may miraculously sustain the field

of consciousness even after the brain has been destroyed and that he may restore a material basis in the resurrection of the body. Similar to emergentism is the anthropological idea of constitution presented by Lynne Baker („Personen und die Metaphysik der Auferstehung“, 189-208). Human persons are material objects, constituted by their bodies, but they are not identical with them, because the crucial feature of personhood is the first-person-perspective. The persistence of a person therefore is guaranteed by the persistence of this perspective, and it is possible that the person survives a certain transformation of her body as long as the latter serves as a basis for identical self-consciousness. Because this condition can be fulfilled by the power of God, Baker recognizes the possibility of resurrection without postulating an immaterial soul. A second essay by Peter van Inwagen combines a review of his earlier proposals for a materialistic understanding of resurrection with a thorough discussion of Baker's Constitution View („Ich erwarte die Auferstehung der Toten und das Leben der kommenden Welt“, 209-225). Van Inwagen is not convinced that God can provide a person after resurrection with a first-person perspective numerically identical with the one that constitutes her as a person here and now without genuine physical continuity. Hud Hudson is another contemporary representative of “a materialist metaphysics of the human person” who nevertheless argues for the possibility of post-mortem existence („Vielfach und einfach verortete Auferstehung“, 227-241). Against animalism and the theories developed by Baker, van Inwagen and Zimmerman, Hudson takes as his starting point a perdurantist, four-dimensional perspective of human persistence. Things are not only constituted by spatial dimensions, but also by their extension in time. Between the existence in our earthly body and in our new material body after resurrection there may be a temporal gap that does not destroy identity. As an alternative to this assumption based on mereological arguments, Hudson offers a second solution depending on his “hyperspace hypothesis” (explained in detail in the book “The Metaphysics of Hyperspace” published in 2005): Our four-dimensional spacetime may be only one region in a greater continuum of physically independent spacetimes. With these premises, he can develop new models of persistence that differ according to the number and nature of regions an object is related to. If human beings are material objects standing in local relation to more than one region with different

temporal indices, or if they are located in only one region of space, that has two or more distinct temporal parts, resurrection could be possible. In the volume's concluding piece, Godehard Brüntrup outlines a possible alternative way of recognizing persistence with avoidance of the problems arising from standard endurantist or perdurantist accounts („3,5-Dimensionalismus und Überleben: ein prozess-ontologischer Ansatz“, 245-268). Departing from the principles of process ontology, he intends to bring together the aspects of continuity and transformation with regard to human beings in a more convincing theory named “3.5 dimensionalism”. A subject has to be considered as diachronic a “series of momentary psycho-physical events”, in which there is no strict separation between physical and mental properties. These events are not identical, but connected by immanent causation. Therefore, persons are not “substances” in the classical sense of the word, but entities that consist of “slices” connected by “gen-identity” relations. But what can guarantee the unity of a person in this bundle-view, if its specific difference to all other kinds of beings consists in the first-person perspective, the person's stream of consciousness? Following on Whitehead, Brüntrup conceives enduring individual beings (“continuants”) on analogy with universals (abstract entities) in a conceptualist approach: They never exist without a mind that recognizes relations and determines identity. Personal identity is the connection of different events to a stable process under the presupposition that there is an abstractive mind to discover repeating patterns in causally connected events, thus defining the “substantial form” of continuants. In the moment of death the chain of events that constitute persons is interrupted. But God could make the person survive by creating a subsequent event that is connected to the last one in earthly life. His intervention guarantees the objective connection of all subject-related stages before and after death and at the same time the possibility of “resurrection”.

With its careful selection of essays the volume offers a comprehensive overview of the complex discussions concerning the persistence of human beings, their possible survival of death and the rationality of the belief in resurrection in the area of contemporary analytic philosophy. German readers familiar with traditional theological eschatology may be surprised about the relevance of Christian materialism in these discourses and about the fact that there are modern philosophers of religion

that do not much care about theological warnings of eschatological “physicalism”. It is less surprising that the historically well-known affinity between materialistic and idealistic monism is returning in current debates – the step from a psycho-physiological view of the mind as an emergent capacity of the brain to pan-psychism seems not to be too big. When boundaries between opposed theoretical attitudes become more permeable, strictly dualist positions lose some of their appeal, although they are still present. Unfortunately, in the limited context of a review it is not possible to enter into the discussion of the various theories outlined in the volume and to ask for the consequences that they imply (e.g. in regard to the concept of God or to other eschatological topics). Both philosophers and theologians who rise to these challenges, particularly in the context of academic courses, will use this book with great profit