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R.A. DUFF

RESURRECTION

The Judaeo-Christian belief in a future general resurrection of the dead arose in late second-temple Judaism (see, for example, Daniel 12: 2 and John 11: 24). (Whether there would be a resurrection of the dead was one of the main points that divided the Pharisees and the Sadducees.) When the new Christian movement appeared – before it was clearly something other than a party or sect within Judaism – it centred on the belief that the crucified Jesus of Nazareth had been, in a literal, bodily sense, raised from the dead (resurrectus) and that his resurrection was, in some way, the means by which the expected general resurrection of the dead would be accomplished. Indeed, resurrection was so pervasive a theme in early Christian preaching that it was apparently sometimes thought that Christians

worshipped two gods called 'Jesus' and 'Resurrection' (Anastasis). The early Christians generally said that 'God raised Jesus from the dead'. In post-New Testament times, it became more common for Christians to say that 'Jesus rose from the dead'. Belief in the resurrection of Jesus and a future general resurrection continue to be central to Christianity. Christians have always insisted that resurrection is not a mere restoration of what the resurrected person had before death (as in the story in the fourth Gospel of the raising of Lazarus) but is rather a doorway into a new kind of life. The status of a belief in the general resurrection in rabbinic Judaism is difficult to summarize. It should be noted, however, that a belief in the resurrection of the dead is one of Maimonides' 'thirteen principles', which some Jews regard as a summary of the essential doctrines of Judaism. A belief in a general resurrection of the dead is one of many Judaeo-Christian elements that have been incorporated into Islam.

- 1 The concept of resurrection
- 2 Philosophical difficulties

1 The concept of resurrection

The concept of the resurrection of the body (or of the dead) is most easily explained by laying out the ways in which it differs from the most important competing picture of the survival of death, the Platonic picture. According to PLATO (§13), when one dies (that is, when one's body dies), one will continue to be what one has been all along, a soul: an immaterial centre of consciousness, reason and action. One's death is, therefore, an extrinsic change in one: being dead means simply no longer having a body to animate. Since one's death is an extrinsic change in one, one's survival of death is something that happens in the natural course of events: one continues to exist after death by the continued exercise of the same powers or capacities that enabled one to exist when one still animated a body. (This inference is natural and plausible, but, as Descartes would later point out, it is not logically valid: for all logic can tell us, animating a body might be essential to the existence of a soul.) Death is, moreover, not a bad thing, as the vulgar believe, but a liberation, for the body is a prison of the soul – or it might be likened to a millstone that drags the soul down into the world of flux and impermanence. The liberation of the soul by death will not, unfortunately, be permanent, for the soul is destined repeatedly to suffer the misfortune of embodiment.

Christians, Jews and Muslims who believe in the resurrection of the dead will accept two of Plato's theses about death: that the person does survive

death, and that dead persons will not be forever disembodied. But everyone who believes in resurrection will dispute the following elements of Plato's metaphysics of body, soul and death: that the body is a prison; that the soul must by its very nature survive the death of the body; and that the embodied soul has been disembodied in the past and will experience a large, perhaps infinite, number of 'reincarnations' in the future. Christians, moreover, will insist that the new bodily life that awaits the soul (the saved soul, at least; perhaps this is not true of the damned) will not be of the same sort as its earlier life. The doctrine of resurrection, however, is no more than a doctrine. It is not a worked-out metaphysics of body, soul and death. (The primary biblical data concerning the metaphysics of resurrection are found in 1 Corinthians 15: 35-55. This passage, however, is open to a variety of interpretations.)

There are several competing philosophical theories of the metaphysics of resurrection. Some who accept the doctrine of resurrection deny the existence of a separable, immaterial soul. Examples include TERTULLIAN, who argued in his *De anima* (c.210-13) that the soul is corporeal, and, in the twentieth century, the Scottish computer scientist D.M. MacKay (1987) and the English physicist J.C. Polkinghorne (1994). Others accept the existence of an immaterial soul, but differ on the question whether the person, the 'I', is the immaterial soul. AQUINAS (§10), for example, sees the human person as essentially a composite of a human soul and a human body. According to the 'composite' theory, a person cannot exist without a body: to exist is for one's soul (always numerically the same) to animate some human body or other. (In the interval between one's death and one's receiving a new body at the time of the general resurrection, one's soul exists and thinks and has experiences, but *one* does not, strictly speaking, exist.) However, others who believe in a separable soul – most of the Fathers of the Church, and, probably, most Christians who have not given the matter much thought – accept a metaphysics of soul and body that is deceptively similar to Plato's: one *is* an immaterial soul, and one will exist and think and have experiences throughout the interval during which one is without a body. But even the members of this party – the theologically well instructed among them, at any rate – would accept the following anti-Platonic theses: that the death of one's 'first' body is not a natural consequence of the impermanence of material things, but is rather a result of the Fall; that the soul's survival of death is not a natural consequence of its immateriality or simplicity, but is rather a miracle, a special gift from God; that existing without a body is not a good thing for the soul, an essential part of the *telos* of which is to animate a

body; and that the life of the 'spiritual' or 'glorified' body that the saved soul will be given at the general resurrection will be qualitatively different from (and superior to) the life of the soul's first or 'natural' body. (It must be emphasized that, whatever 'spiritual body' may mean, it does not mean 'immaterial body'.)

2 Philosophical difficulties

Each of these metaphysical theories of resurrection faces philosophical problems. Believers in resurrection who are dualists face the problems any dualist faces (see DUALISM). Since these problems are the same whether or not the dualist believes in resurrection, they will not be discussed here. Believers in resurrection who are materialists (as regards human beings) face the problems any materialist faces (see MATERIALISM IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF MIND). Since these problems are the same whether or not the materialist believes in resurrection, they will not be discussed here. In addition, however, believers in resurrection who are materialists face a special philosophical problem about personal identity. The remainder of this entry will discuss this special problem.

It can be plausibly argued that the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead presupposes some form of dualism. For if human persons are not immaterial souls, if they are living animals, then it would seem that death must be the end of them. A living animal is a material object. A material object is composed, at any given moment, of certain atoms. But if one is composed of certain atoms today, it is clear from what we know about the metabolisms of living things that one was not composed of those same atoms a year ago: one must then have been composed of a set of atoms that hardly overlaps the set of atoms that composes one today – and so for any living organism. This fact, the fact that the atoms of which a living organism is composed are in continuous flux, is a stumbling block for the materialist who believes in resurrection.

Suppose, then, that God proposes to raise Socrates from the dead. How shall he accomplish this? How shall even omnipotence bring back a particular person who lived long ago and has returned to the dust? – whose former atoms have been, for millennia, spread pretty evenly throughout the biosphere? This question does not confront the dualist, who will say either that there is no need to bring Socrates back (because, so to speak, Socrates has never left), or else that Socrates can be brought back simply by providing his soul (which still exists) with a newly created human body. But what will the materialist say? From the point of view of the materialist, it looks as if asking God to bring Socrates back is like asking

him to bring back the snows of yesteryear or the light of other days. For what can even omnipotence do but reassemble? What else is there to do? And reassembly is not enough, for Socrates was composed of different atoms at different times. If someone says, 'If God now reassembles the atoms that composed Socrates at the moment of his death, those reassembled atoms will once more compose Socrates', there is an obvious objection to the thesis. If God can reassemble the atoms that composed Socrates at the moment of his death in 399 BC – and no doubt he can – he can also reassemble the atoms that composed Socrates at some particular instant in 409 BC. In fact, if there is no overlap between the two sets of atoms, God could do both of these things, and set the two resulting men side by side. And which would be Socrates? Neither or both, it would seem, and, since not both, neither.

It might be objected that God would not do such a frivolous thing, and this may indeed be so. Nevertheless, if God were to reassemble either set of atoms, the resulting man would be who he was, and it is absurd, it is utterly incoherent, to suppose that his identity could depend on what might happen to some atoms other than the atoms that composed him (for this is what a materialist who holds that the reassembled '399 BC' atoms compose Socrates just so long as the '409 BC' atoms are not also reassembled is committed to). In 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 at any time composes that man. (St Paul seems to suggest, in the passage from I Corinthians cited above, that this will indeed be the case.) But '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.

See also: ESCHATOLOGY; PERSONAL IDENTITY; REINCARNATION §3; SOUL, NATURE AND IMMORTALITY OF THE

References and further reading

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PETER VAN INWAGEN

REVELATION

All major theistic religions have revealed themselves in some way. The thing of himself in each is true, important and different. Event-revelation may be defined as (God revealing himself to a people, able by all, such as to conform to natural laws (God revealing himself in events). The events God has brought to pass of his character. Thus manifested his nature brought his people promised land through a victory traditionally affirmed in a much fuller sense did not merely show God but was God himself some chosen prophets or in writing which for believing unless persons who showed Thus Islam teaches write the Qur'an in success (its proclamation civilized world), expressed in a beautiful uneducated person.

- 1 Event revelation
- 2 Propositional revelation
- 3 Propositional revelation

1 Event revelation

Any event brought to pass a thing of that age in the world, one would expect something about represented God day and night, the resurrection and night after death and providing a resurrection should be believed. Writers have seen as the general understanding of the working together of the human race. Most special, as well as 'neo-orthodox' Karl BARTH (§2