

William Hasker at the Bridge of Death

Emergentism and the prospects of survival

Glenn Peoples

William Hasker believes that his view of human nature, called “emergent dualism” or just “emergentism,” provides a middle way between traditional dualism and physicalism.¹ He considers that his alternative steers clear of modern criticisms of traditional dualism, while avoiding the pitfalls of physicalism, in particular the problems of free will and life after death. This article focuses on Hasker’s arguments about emergentism and life after death. In a nutshell, I claim that Hasker’s view offers no such alternative, but rather he holds two conflicting views, one about human nature and another about life after death. Hasker’s attempts to resolve this conflict, I will argue, have not been successful. I will suggest that the Hasker’s model may make life after death just as difficult to account for as he thinks it is in the physicalism that he rejects. It is important to say right at the beginning, however, that I am not arguing here that emergentism is false.

I find it disagreeable to disagree with Dr Hasker, largely because in my undergraduate years his work on the mind-body problem with its lucid presentation and striking insight greatly helped me in developing my own thoughts on the subject. But if the William Hasker who might read this is identical with the William Hasker I read those years ago, this is exactly what he would want an admirer who disagreed with him to do.²

One important principle

¹ For my part I prefer the term “emergentism” to “emergent dualism” since I do not think it that Hasker’s position really qualifies as “dualism,” but I also think that the matter of what we *call* the view is of little to no importance.

² I want to thank Dr Hasker, as well as Dr Nancy Murphy, for feedback on a draft of this paper.

The scope of this paper rules out a lengthy discussion of traditional (Cartesian, Platonic, call it what you will) dualism, but one of Dr Hasker's defenses of that view against one objection is very important for my own defense of physicalism against one of Hasker's objections, so it must be outlined here. Traditional anthropological dualism is thus described by Charles Hodge:

The Scriptures teach that... man consists of two distinct principles, a body and a soul: the one material, the other immaterial: the one corporeal, the other spiritual. It is involved in this statement, *a substance distinct from the body...* The Scriptural doctrine of the nature of man as a created spirit in vital union with an organized body, *consisting therefore of two, and only two, distinct elements or substances, matter and mind*, is... properly designated as realistic dualism [emphasis added].³

The Westminster Confession uses similar language when it speaks "on the state of men after death":

The bodies of men, after death, return to dust, and see corruption; but their souls, which neither die nor sleep, having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them.⁴

The thought here is that God gave immaterial souls to material bodies, and when the body dies, the soul returns to God. The view is basically "that there are both physical and non-physical substances, that you and I and all other human persons are non-physical substances, and that each human person bears some sort of intimate relation to a certain living human organism, the person's body."⁵ One question that critics of traditional dualism have raised from time to time is how exactly an immaterial soul can act on a material brain and body. Immaterial things, surely, do not have electrical discharges, they do not prod or poke the body, and it is difficult to see how they might do anything at all to the body. Hasker, however, does not think that since we can't figure out how an immaterial soul interacts with a material brain, it cannot do so at all. After all, "it may be true that there is some difficulty in imagining just how this influence operates, but what of that? There is no reason to think that reality is limited by what we can easily imagine."⁶ Hasker's response is particularly appropriate in

³ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.), 42, 46.

⁴ Westminster Confession of Faith, 32:1.

⁵ Peter Van Inwagen, "Dualism and Materialism: Athens and Jerusalem?" *Faith and Philosophy* 12:4 (1995)

⁶ William Hasker, *Metaphysics: Constructing a Worldview*, *Contours of Christian Philosophy* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1983), 68.

response to *Christian* non-dualists who raise this objection, since, one would think, a Christian is committed to the view that the Spirit of God is capable of influencing a person, and thus it must be the case, as far as the Christian physicalist is concerned, the immaterial can influence the material – somehow. The very fact that Christians believe that an immaterial God created a physical universe should settle this question forever. This principle will become important later on, so it needs to be noted now: Hasker claims, rightly, that the limits of our ability to imagine how something can happen must not determine whether or not we think something is possible.

(One of) Hasker's Reasons For Rejecting Physicalism

Since the purpose of this paper is to evaluate one aspect of the view that Hasker advances, I will not attempt to cover all of his criticisms of physicalism, choosing instead to focus only on the objection that, I will argue, highlights a particular weakness in his own view (I consider it a case of people in glass houses throwing stones).

Hasker argues that if physicalism were true, the resurrection of the dead would be impossible. More specifically, he claims that if physicalism is correct, then any person resurrected in the future will be a new individual person, and not a person who has lived and died before.⁷ Hasker is not alone in making this argument. Perhaps the most confidently and widely cited contemporary anti-physicalist evangelical scholar in print, John Cooper has said that dualistic accounts of human nature “have absolutely no difficulty” explaining continuity of identity between death and resurrection. Absolutely none at all! In fact, such accounts are said to

⁷ Hasker makes this argument in a number of places, such as “Resurrection and Mind-Body Identity: Can There Be Eternal Life Without a Soul?” *Christian Scholar's Review* 4:4 (1975), 319-325, “Brains, Persons and Eternal Life,” *Christian Scholar's Review* 12:4 (1983), 294-309, *Metaphysics: Constructing a Worldview* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1983), 76-80, *The Emergent Self* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 211-222, “Emergent Dualism: Challenge to a Materialist Consensus” in Joel B. Green (ed.), *What About the Soul? Neuroscience and Christian Anthropology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004), 110-111 and lastly “On Behalf of Emergent Dualism” in Joel B. Green and Stuart L. Palmer (ed.), *In Search of the Soul: Four Views of the Mind-Body Problem* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 92-94. It is safe to assume that a sample of this size adequately captures Hasker's view, whatever else he might have written on the subject.

“guarantee personal identity.”⁸ Given that souls do not die in the first place, there *is* no problem of continuity. The soul is the essence of the person, so while the physical organism may cease to function, the person does not. Rather, he/she undergoes relocation (setting aside for now the problem of how a thing that is not extended in space in the first place might be relocated from a physical location) before being (re)incarnated in a new body at the resurrection.

The continuity that ties us in this life on earth to the post-resurrection life in such a dualistic scheme is something like what theologian Millard Erickson describes:

Believing in some sort of dualism of body and soul (or spirit) in the human person, the orthodox maintained that part of the human survives death. Death consists in the separation of the soul from the body. The immaterial soul lives on in a conscious personal existence while the body decomposes. At Christ’s second coming, there will be a resurrection of a renewed or transformed body, which will be reunited with the soul. Thus, orthodoxy held to the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body.⁹

Physicalism however, so the anti-physicalist argument goes, has no way of accounting for the claim that the person who will rise in the resurrection is the same person who died a thousand years beforehand, since in physicalism, the person is the body (or something that is dependent on the body), and a new body would mean a new person. A physicalist view of human nature thus has a “fatal flaw,” says Cooper, in that it offers no possibility of the resurrection of people who have previously died.

Hasker picks up on this argument and uses it with apparent force. He says that “It is... nonsensical to assert that God creates out of nothing a person that has already lived, died and completely passed out of existence.”¹⁰ It is not only false in the final analysis, he says, it is absolutely absurd, nonsensical to even entertain such a thought. I want to be clear at the outset that Hasker is not only offering an argument against

⁸ John W. Cooper, “The Identity of Resurrected Persons: Fatal Flaw of Monistic Anthropology,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 23:1 (1988), 26.

⁹ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998, 2nd ed.), 1180-81.

¹⁰ Hasker, *Metaphysics*, 80.

the *truth* of the combination of physicalism and resurrection. His claim is that the view is literally incoherent, that is, contradictory or inconceivable. Is it “intelligible,” he asks, for a purely bodily creature (named “John Smith”) to live after death? His answer is a definite *no*.

Hasker sums up what I take to be something like the most common physicalist conception of human nature, wherein “John Smith is identical with a certain living human body.”¹¹ But if this is so, then, says Hasker, a lack of spatio-temporal continuity between this body and the resurrection body exists. He claims that regardless of whether one is a dualist or a physicalist, bodily spatio-temporal continuity is out of the picture.

[W]hat is it that lives both now and then? Is it literally the same *body* which shall rise again on the last day? Few have thought so; indeed, one can easily imagine circumstances which make this impossible. It may often have happened that each and every particle of matter making up a person’s body later on became part of the bodies of other persons – and it might also happen that a body should be caught in a nuclear holocaust and pulverized into its constituent elementary particles, so that literally no single atom of the original body remains.¹²

That such a lack of spatio-temporal continuity would exist, says Hasker, is an adequate reason to reject the combination of physicalism and the resurrection of the dead, thus ruling physicalism out as an option for Christians.

There are a few things to be said in response to the above, without getting into a defense of physicalism against the argument at any length. Firstly, it is a mistake to think that “few have thought” that the body that will rise again is the same body as that which died. In fact, *virtually all* Christian writers on the resurrection of the dead have thought so. William Lane Craig, in his defense of the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus, notes the obvious parallel in Paul’s thought between Christ’s resurrection and our own:

Paul taught that just as Jesus was raised from the dead, so we will also be raised from the dead “at His coming” (1 Corinthians 15:20-24). Thus, contrary to popular opinion, the Christian hope is not that our souls will live forever, but rather that our bodies will be raised up to eternal life. But in

¹¹ Hasker, *Metaphysics*, 79.

¹² Hasker, “Resurrection and Mind-Body Identity,” 319.

order for that to be possible, the present, mortal body must be transformed. ... According to Paul, it is the present body or the remains of it that will be transformed and raised as a glorious new body. Thus, after the resurrection all the graves and cemeteries would be empty. Since what will happen to us is simply a repetition of what happened to Jesus, Paul undoubtedly believed that Jesus' tomb was empty.¹³

I have no doubt that Hasker too believes that the tomb of Jesus was empty after the resurrection, but why was this even necessary, if in Hasker's view the body that rises is not the same one that died? Christian theologians have long thought that the two bodies are the same body in the cases of both Christ and ourselves, even if the body gains new qualities at the resurrection. Trenton Merricks makes the accurate historical observation that "the overwhelming majority of theologians and philosophers in the history of the church have endorsed the claim of numerical identity [of the resurrection body as it related to our present body]."¹⁴ The general consensus has been that expressed by the Westminster Divines:

At the last day, such as are found alive shall not die, but be changed: and all the dead shall be raised up, with the self-same bodies, and none other (although with different qualities), which shall be united to their souls for ever.¹⁵

So what Hasker is proposing is simply unorthodox, which might not be a problem in itself if not for the fact that he implied that it was orthodox in order to use it as a weapon against physicalism, saying that "few" have disagreed with him. Nearly everyone has disagreed with him. If Hasker thinks that the problem for physicalism arises because the resurrection body must be a new body and not the same body as the old one, then ironically, it is theological orthodoxy that comes to the rescue of the physicalist! To his credit, Hasker has since conceded that Christian orthodoxy is against the position that a different body will rise in the resurrection than

¹³ William Lane Craig, *The Son Rises: Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2001), 69.

¹⁴ Merricks, "The Resurrection of the Body and the Life Everlasting," 268.

¹⁵ Westminster Confession of Faith 32:2, in *Forms and Confessions of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand* (National Publishing Committee of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, 1994), 169. I certainly do not endorse this statement, as it assumes substance dualism. The point is only that the *same* body is said to be raised as the one that died.

the one that died.¹⁶ This means that Hasker has lost the leverage of being able to portray physicalists as requiring an all-new body that remains the same person somehow.

Secondly, there is nothing impressive about the fact that we might be able to “easily imagine” the scenarios. Hasker suggests. The fact that they are imaginable doesn’t suggest that either of them will occur. It is possible (whether Hasker thinks it likely or not) that God will prevent some the particles from any body from becoming part of another person’s body. It is also possible that no human body will ever be pulverized in a nuclear holocaust to the point where none of the original atoms exist. We can “easily imagine” a situation where an emergent mind fails to survive death as well – as Hasker would agree – but just as reality is not limited by what we can imagine, neither does it necessarily *conform* to what we can imagine.

Although I am not responding in any depth to these arguments here (since they are not the subject of this paper), I am aware of good reasons for being unmoved by them, and there is plenty in the literature to occupy the time of the reader who wishes to follow up on those reasons. My purpose here, however, is simply to note what Hasker’s objections are, for the purposes of asking whether or not his own view manages to successfully avoid his own objections to other views. I do want to point out, nonetheless, that while Hasker may be correct if he says that the combination of physicalism and resurrection is perplexing or very hard to imagine working in practice, this is not the same as having demonstrated a formal contradiction or logical impossibility, and as Hasker was keen to remind the reader when defending dualism against an objection, “There is no reason to think that reality is limited by what we can easily imagine.”¹⁷

¹⁶ The concession is not always clear. For example, in responding to Kevin Corcoran’s observation that the Christian tradition teaches that “it is the very same bodies that died that will be raised on the last day,” his only comment on the accuracy of this claim – in spite of his own denials of it elsewhere – is “maybe so.” In his feedback on the draft version of this paper, Dr Hasker accepts that he “over reached” in saying that few have believed in the identity of the future body and the current body.

¹⁷ For some intriguing defenses and/or discussion of a physicalist view of resurrection and how it might overcome objections of the kind Hasker raises, see David Mouton, “Physicalism and Immortality,” *Religious Studies* 8:1 (1972), 45-53, Bruce R. Reichenbach, “Re-Creationism and Personal Identity,” *Christian Scholar’s Review* 4:4 (1975), 326-330, George Mavrodes, “The Life Everlasting and the Bodily Criterion of Identity,” *Nous* 11:1 (1977), 27-39, Bruce, R. Reichenbach, “Monism and the Possibility of Life After Death,” *Religious Studies* 14:1 (1978), 27-34, Lynne Rudder Baker, “Need a Christian be a Mind-Body Dualist?” *Faith and Philosophy* 12:4 (1995), 489-504, Peter

Hasker's Characterization of Emergent Dualism

If Emergent Dualism does not involve reference to an immaterial substance added to the body, then what does it say the mind is? Firstly, what does it mean for a thing to be “emergent”?

[M]ental properties are “emergent” in the following sense: they are properties that manifest themselves when the appropriate material constituents are placed in special, highly complex relationships, but these properties are not observable in simpler configurations nor are they derivable from the laws which describe the properties of matter as it behaves in these simpler configurations. Which is to say: mental properties are emergent; they involve emergent causal powers that are not in evidence in the absence of consciousness.¹⁸

To flesh out this notion and enable the reader to see that the idea of an emergent mind has initial plausibility, Hasker appeals to the example of magnetic fields, which are generated by material objects and not identical with them, having causal powers that the material objects themselves lack.

A magnetic field, for example, is a real, existing, concrete entity, distinct from the magnet which produces it. (This is shown by the fact that the field normally occupies – and is detectable in – a region of space considerably larger than that occupied by the magnet.) The field is “generated” by the magnet in virtue of the fact that the magnet’s material constituents are arranged in a certain way – namely when a sufficient number of the iron molecules are aligned so that their “micro-fields” reinforce each other and produce an overall detectable field. But once generated, the field exerts a causality of its own, on the magnet itself as well as on other objects in the vicinity.... Keeping all this in mind, we can say that *as a magnet generates its magnetic field, so the brain generates its field of consciousness*.¹⁹

It is very important to realize that emergence is not merely the view that the mind “emerged” (past tense) from the body, like something to which the body gave birth and which now develops independently. Emergence is

Van Inwagen, “Materialism and the Psychological-Continuity Account of Personal Identity,” *Nous* 31 (supplement, 1997), 305-319, Trenton Merricks, “The Resurrection of the Body and the Life Everlasting,” in Michael J. Murray (ed.), *Reason for the Hope Within* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 261-286. See also the essays by Nancey Murphy and Kevin Corcoran in Joel B. Green and Stuart L. Palmer (ed.), *In Search of the Soul: Four Views of the Mind-Body Problem* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2005).

¹⁸ Hasker, *The Emergent Self*, 189-190.

¹⁹ Hasker, *The Emergent Self*, 190. I take it to be less than obvious that the magnetic field itself possess causal powers that the magnet does not. If the field and all that it does is caused by the properties of the magnet, then this claim is just untrue.

the view that the mind “emerges” (present continuous tense) from the body – it did not “emerge from,” it is “emergent upon” the body. Hasker makes this clear:

As a consequence of certain configuration and function of the brain and nervous system, a new entity comes into being – namely, the mind or soul. This new thing is not merely a “configurational state” of the cells of the brain... The mind, on this view, is “a thing in itself”; it is what some philosophers call a “substance.” It is not made of the chemical stuff of which the brain is composed, **though it crucially depends on that chemical stuff both for its origin and its continuance** [emphasis added].²⁰

In fairness to Hasker, I must allow that when he says that the mind is dependent on “that chemical stuff” of the brain, he is only saying this because he is talking about minds that *are* emergent on brains. But we must allow that brains are not themselves necessary for the definition of emergentism to be met. Perhaps a number of different possible organisms (or perhaps acts of God) could give rise to the same emergent mind. The point is only that in order for the mind (or anything) to really be emergent (and not independent), it must – for its own existence – be dependent on the ongoing existence of whatever it is emergent upon, be it a brain or something else. Again, he notes elsewhere (and I will not multiply further examples of what is clear here) of his view that “it is an *emergent* dualism, because the mental individual *emerges* from the organism and is sustained by it; it is not (as in traditional dualism) a separate element *added* to the organism from outside by divine fiat.”²¹ In fact “by divine fiat” is redundant here, as the concept of emergence is opposed to a new substance being added from outside by any means. The emergence of the mind is continually dependent on the brain from which the mind emerges. These three quotations from Hasker provide an excellent overall, even if slightly simplified, description of emergentism, and I will use the term *emergentism-d* to refer to this definition. In short, emergentism as here described by Dr Hasker involves a thing being generated by and sustained by another thing, and the generated thing may have causal power not possessed by the generating object. To the extent that a concept differs from this, it is not emergentism – not, at least, as Hasker has described it at the outset.

²⁰ Hasker, “On Behalf of Emergent Dualism,” 78.

²¹ Hasker, “Emergent Dualism: Challenge to a Materialist Consensus,” 112.

Emergent Dualism and Life After Death: Pot Meets Kettle

This section is the main point of this paper. Up until this point, anyone who was waiting for Hasker to provide an alternative to anthropological dualism or physicalism will be forgiven for feeling somewhat short changed. Like (other?) physicalists, Hasker presents us with a world where “the potentiality for conscious life and experience really does exist in the nature of matter itself.”²² His concept of the mind has the mind parasitic on the body, being produced by the body, dependent on the body/brain for its ongoing existence, and everything that affects the brain affects the mind as a result. If the brain is electrically stimulated the right way, the mind will produce certain feelings because of its dependence on the brain. If the brain is harmed, the outcome consistent with Hasker’s theory and with scientific observation is that the mind suffers loss of function as a result (which is why emergentism has no problem at all, for example, with the fact that when the body consumes alcohol, the mind is directly affected). Every intervening or harmful cause acting on the brain produces an effect in the mind. Everything, that is, except the *death* of that brain, which for obvious reasons seems a little strange. How could it be that the mind is produced by the brain and is dependent on the ongoing providence of the brain for its sustenance, suffers when the brain is harmed, produces the right feelings when the brain is stimulated in a certain way, and yet is immune to the death of the brain? Up until this point one would naturally have thought that emergent dualism served as a reason for *denying* that the mind survives the death of the body. This is all the more to be expected given that he critiqued physicalism precisely *because* its concept of a mind that depends on a physical brain rules out the survival of the mind after the death of the brain. To his credit, Hasker confesses that the chances of surviving bodily death, given emergentism, do not look very healthy:

It should be said at once that emergent dualism does not lend itself to a doctrine of natural immortality. If anything, the tendency of the view is in the opposite direction: it recognizes the intimate dependence of the mental functioning on brain function, and there is no particular reason to expect that the mental functions can be performed when the relevant parts of the brain have ceased to operate.

²² Hasker, *The Emergent Self*, 194.

I submit that Hasker is being much too easy on himself (a tendency for us all, I am sure). Emergentism does not merely have a “tendency” to deny post mortem survival, nor is it the case that there is merely “no particular reason” to expect such survival. Emergentism (as described by Hasker earlier) appears to *entail* the denial of such survival. Recall the repeated and clear description of emergentism as a view whereby the mind is generated *and sustained on an ongoing basis* by the configuration and operation of the brain. If the mind is dependent on the brain for its ongoing existence (as opposed to traditional dualism where the independent soul is dependent on no physical agent, but only God, for its sustenance), then the destruction of the brain brings about the destruction of the mind, and there is no possibility of its survival of bodily death. It looks like an open and shut case.

What escape might there be for the emergentist who wants to escape the unenviable position of having to defend the view that, not just an immaterial soul, but an *emergent* soul, might survive the demise of the object upon which it is emergent? In light of the very apparent implausibility of the claim, Hasker appeals to analogy. There are other scenarios, he insists, whether an emergent entity *does* survive the annihilation of the object on which it is emergent. Perhaps, then, the impossibility of this position on life after death is merely apparent impossibility, and we should cut the emergentist some slack. “A black hole, for example, is an incredibly intense gravitational field which is originally generated by a massive object. But once it has formed, **it literally squeezes the generating object out of existence**” [emphasis added].²³ Hasker claims that the soul, in the same kind of way, becomes self sustaining once the body has become unnecessary for its existence. The problem with the comparison is that black holes do not squeeze objects out of existence, nor do we know that they are or ever could be self-sustaining in the absence of the matter that generated them.

Hasker cites the testimony of Kip Thorne in defense of this claim, but Thorne’s comments fall well short of saying what Hasker says:

²³ Hasker, *Metaphysics*, 75.

The singularity [of a black hole] and the stellar matter locked up in it are hidden by the hole's horizon. However long you may wait, the locked-up matter can never reemerge. The hole's gravity prevents it... For all practical purposes, it is completely gone from our universe. The only thing left is its intense gravitational pull.²⁴

Thorne does not claim that the stellar matter no longer exists. In fact he explicitly says that it (“the locked-up matter” that Hasker denies the existence of) *does* exist, but it is hidden. It is hidden because its gravitational pull is so great that the light it emits is unable to escape the gravitational field, so we can never *observe* it. This is why he says that it is gone from the universe only “for all practical purposes,” since the collapsed star can no longer be seen or interacted with. But out of sight is not out of mind. Thorne makes this clear in the paragraph immediately after the one Hasker quoted (less than two inches further down the page from where Hasker ends his quotation). Thorne turns to the question of the distance between the event horizon of a black hole and the singularity (the compressed matter) in the middle. He says, “since the singularity is so small, 10^{-33} centimeter, and is at the precise center of the hole, the distance from singularity to horizon should be equal to the horizon's radius.”²⁵ As a piece of matter, the singularity does have size. In fact, the gravitational field is so dependent on the continued existence of the matter that generated and sustains it that the loss of radiation from a black hole, if not compensated for by the absorption of radiation and mass from other objects in space,

²⁴ Kip Thorne, *Black Holes and Time Warps: Einstein's Outrageous Legacy* (New York: Norton, 1994), 30, cited in Hasker, *The Emergent Self*, 232, footnote 66. A similar mishandling of the author's words is involved in Hasker's citation of the only other source he draws on, Roger Penrose, speaking of black holes: “After the body [of the star] has collapsed in, it is better to think of the black hole as a self-sustaining gravitational field in its own right. It has no further use for the body which originally built it!” Roger Penrose, “Black Holes” in *Cosmology Now* (New York: Taplinger, 1976) 124, cited in Hasker, *The Emergent Self*, 232. But by “the body which originally built it,” Penrose here is referring to the body that has collapsed, that is, the large star itself, not the singularity that remains in the center. He says it is “better to think of” the black hole simply as a gravitational field because that is virtually all there is to it, and that is all we can observe, as Kip Thorne noted.

Hasker adds a footnote claiming that there was “a discovery, by the theoretical physicist Mael Melvin, that a sufficiently intense magnetic field can **hold itself together** by gravity even if its generating magnet has been removed” [emphasis added]. Again, Hasker cites Thorne as support, but again, Thorne offers none. Thorne says (p. 263, the page cited by Hasker), “Melvin had shown, using Einstein's field equation, that not only can magnetic field lines be held together against explosion by the iron in a bar magnet, they can also be held together by gravity without the aid of any magnet.” The reason given is that a magnetic field is physical energy, which gravitates. There was *never* any suggestion by Melvin or Thorne that a magnet can be removed and *its* magnetic field can hold *itself* together. There was no suggestion of any magnet being removed. What *was* said is that a magnetic field can be held in place by a magnet, or a magnetic field might alternatively be sustained by a star's gravity, with no need for a magnet. Thorne went on to explain how a star (i.e. a source of gravity) with a strong magnetic field being held in place would implode. But none of this discussion lent any support to what Hasker is getting at, a magnetic field surviving the disappearance of the magnet.

²⁵ Thorne, *Black Holes and Time Warps*, 30.

will lead to the disintegration and “evaporation” of the black hole. Black holes are actually *classified* according to the amount of mass they contain, ranging from small primordial black holes to supermassive black holes, weighing between 10^6 and 10^9 solar masses, illustrating the obvious falsehood of suggesting that the physical matter itself no longer exists.²⁶ I daresay that the oddness of the scientific claim by Hasker matches the oddness of the survival of an emergent mind after its generating body has disappeared. The very *idea* that a piece of matter can literally be squeezed out of existence with physical force is absurd. It can be squeezed to the point where it is very small (10^{-33} centimeters is, after, all, incredibly small), but that is all. The facts are against Hasker’s use of the analogy.

It will do no good to say “well fine, reject the analogies, but they are only analogies, and I don’t need them. Minds are not gravitational fields. They are things with personality and free will.” My point is not that since black holes require matter and magnetic fields require something to sustain them, it follows that an emergent mind needs a body. What has to be stressed is the persuasive function that analogies with black holes and magnetic fields play in Hasker’s various presentations of emergentism. If emergentism were, on the face of it, compatible with the emergent mind surviving the death of the body upon which the mind is emergent, these analogies would not need to be made at all. It is the fact that there appears to be a contradiction here that prompts an emergentist to say, in effect, “I know there appears to be a contradiction here, but there *appears*, in a similar way, to be a contradiction in the case of black holes as well, for the emergent entity survives the demise of the entity on which it is emergent as well, yet we all believe in black holes, right?” The analogies are to deliver the theory from defeat, yet they fail to do so, for there is nothing to appeal to, since the survival that Hasker seeks to appeal to in black holes and magnetic fields does not exist. The fact is, we know of *no* relevantly similar scenarios where an emergent entity can exist in the absence of that upon which it is emergent, provided we are sticking with *emergentism-d*. The apparent contradiction therefore remains, with no deliverance available via real-world analogy.

²⁶ “Black Hole,” *Swinburne Astronomy Online Encyclopedia*, <http://astronomy.swin.edu.au/cms/astro/cosmos/%2A/Black+Hole>, accessed 21st October 2007.

My comments about these analogies notwithstanding, my judgment that an emergent mind needs the continued existence of the human body is prior to my denial of the effectiveness of these analogies. An emergent mind needs a brain because *emergentism-d* just *is* the view that the mind is generated and sustained by the brain (or perhaps the whole body including the brain). As Hasker described emergent properties and by extension the emergent self, as noted earlier, the mind emerges and is continually emergent as the result of the special organization of the brain. As soon as we start talking about an independent mind that is not emergent, we are not emergent dualists at all, but more traditional mind/body dualists who think that the mind is not emergent after all but some other substantial entity added to the body and independent of it. Introducing special miracles to save one's position from obvious collapse is not a sign that instills confidence in that position, but this is exactly the resort Hasker now makes, after understating his problems by saying that emergentism has the "tendency" to undermine the mind's survival of bodily death:

The fact remains, however, that the consciousness is a *distinct individual*, not identical with the physical organism or any part of it. As such, it is capable of existing, if sustained by divine power, in the absence of the organism. For the mind to be able to function in such a state, God would need not to merely sustain its existence, but to supply in some way the kinds of support needed to replace the role normally played by brain in generating and sustaining the field of consciousness.²⁷

Now, giving credit to Hasker, that such divine action is needed to insure immediate life after death is an affirmation of the belief that "eternal life is a gift of divine grace and not a natural endowment of the creature."²⁸ One who holds this view might see this type of post mortem sustenance, rather than being something automatically received by all, as only being given to those who find favor with God. In light of the implausibility of the idea that analogies from black holes or magnetic fields might help us here, this divine sustenance explanation appears to jettison whatever those analogies might have offered, since now we are not dealing with any sort of self sustaining field at all, but rather merely a transfer of sustainer. There are three issues

²⁷ Hasker, *The Emergent Self*, 114.

²⁸ Hasker, *The Emergent Self*, 114.

here: Firstly, *emergentism-d* is now denied. Secondly, explaining exactly how this transfer might take place is no small difficulty (and not merely because of ignorance), and thirdly, there is still a tricky matter surrounding what the mind consists of – something that could have been overlooked up to the point where Hasker’s vision of survival came along.

I turn first to my claim that this description of post-mortem survival is a denial of *emergentism-d*. Emergentism as Hasker has built up his description maintains that “the brain generates its field of consciousness,” and this field (or rather, entity, as Hasker explains), “crucially depends on that chemical stuff both for its origin and its continuance.” This is emergentism. In his description of the soul’s postmortem survival, Hasker envisages a mind that does not depend at all on that chemical stuff for its continuance, hence the mind that he is speaking of is not emergent in the sense of *emergent-d*. It is worth noting here a key difference between traditional dualism and emergentism. In emergentism, the mind is sustained by the body. In traditional dualism, the mind is not dependent on the body, and whatever sustenance it receives – if it is not naturally immortal (and it need not be) – comes directly from God, who essentially fills the role of the body. In emergentism, the mind gets drunk because the body drinks and loses part of its function. If the soul is sustained by God, then God alters the function of the soul in accordance with the alteration of the functioning of the body. In Hasker’s view of life after death, the mind does not depend – crucially or otherwise – on the brain, but rather on something else that does the same sustaining work as the brain. And this is a view of the mind that can be affirmed easily by a traditional dualist, provided it is the “something else,” namely God, that is doing the actual sustaining of the mind. This simply *is* a denial of *emergentism-d*, since the mind is clearly not depicted here as crucially dependent on the thing in which it had its emergent origin. While (as granted earlier) the same mind could have been produced by different entities, this is not at all the same as granting that one such entity can be destroyed and then replaced by another, while the same mind exists, uninterrupted, during the transfer process. Hasker thus has two different views of the soul. He believes that the soul is emergent prior to death, and he adopts a traditional dualist view of the soul after death.

Secondly, the idea of God simply taking over the role of causing the mind to emerge after the body has stopped doing that job is no small intellectual stretch. Under normal circumstances, the mind is emergent upon the brain and nervous system when assembled and functioning (at least roughly) correctly. Hasker might wish to get out of the bind of having to now adopt traditional dualism by insisting that God does not merely sustain the mind after death as a traditional dualist would affirm, but it is *emergent* on God in the same way it was once emergent on a brain and nervous system. The only way for this to be true however is for God to supply an intermediate body – or something that does for the mind exactly what the body did, making it just a body by another name. But how does an emergent mind – while remaining numerically *the same mind* – go from being emergent on one body to being emergent on another? This is not a matter of questioning omnipotence, rather it is a matter of asking if the idea even makes sense. It would be easy for the reader to slip into granting plausibility to the idea if one thinks in terms of sustenance rather than emergence, but Hasker insists that the mind is emergent. Sustenance would be akin to a ping pong ball (representing the mind) being held in the air by a fan blowing a stream of air from below, the fan representing the body. If the fan is destroyed or stops working, it could quickly be replaced with another fan (representing God) and the ball would remain afloat in mid air. But on reflection we see that this is clearly not a case of emergence, but rather of an independent object being sustained in motion (or existence, in the case of the mind). This is not what Hasker is talking about when he talks about an emergent mind surviving the death of the body. In the case of emergence, it is better (even if not perfect) to think of a projector projecting an image on the wall. The projection represents the mind. There could be another projector in another room projecting the same image, but it is not the same *projection*. Now imagine the first projector (representing the brain) breaking down, and instantaneously being replaced by the second projector (representing God). The image might *look* the same, that is, it might be the same image, but it is not the same projection, even if the second projector occupied the place of the first one and was up and running the very instant the first projector stopped working.²⁹ Remember that in order for the

²⁹ If anyone (mistakenly) thought that just because the two images were identical in appearance and there was no time gap between them, remember that in Hasker's emergentism, the brain (represented by the projector) is not the sole

comparison to emergentism to work, we have to be careful that we do not ask if the image is identical, but whether or not it is the identical *projection*. Otherwise, emergentism is simply replicating (pun intended) the problem that Hasker once presented with John Hick's "replica" variety of physicalism and resurrection. There, Hasker replied by saying that this amounts to the following::

"John Smith" names a *general category* of some kind, so that there can be any number of John Smith's [*sic*] so long as they are sufficiently similar in the relevant respects. If this is correct, then there is no problem in saying that the "John Smith" replica really is John Smith. In fact, there is no logical reason... why God must wait until Smith is dead to re-create him – there could be any number of John Smiths alive at the same time, and all of them would have equal claim to being considered the real John Smith.³⁰

Likewise, if all that is needed is an identical projected picture – regardless of the source – to make it the same projection, then there is no reason why the same projection could not exist in multiple manifestations at the same time. It is cold comfort to be told that an exact *copy* of my mind will survive after my body is dead! While the idea of a self-sustaining emergent mind is not obviously a coherent one, it certainly lacked the apparent problem of continuity that this idea of "transferred" emergence seems to have.

Thirdly, there is a problem now with the question of *locating* the mind. One of the inherent strengths of emergentism (and physicalism) over and against traditional dualism is that traditional dualism holds that the soul is not material in any sense of that term, a fact which means that the soul is not located in space. Emergentism presents a much more intuitive view of the mind as actually being spatially connected to the brain, since it is generated and sustained by the physical processes in the brain. An emergentist can quite readily think of the mind as being *located in the brain*, which has an immediate plausibility to it. Something that is caused by physical objects is physical in any suitably robust sense of that word, and before getting to the discussion of post-mortem survival, the emergentist has no reason for taking issue with this. It does, however, make the possibility of God stepping in to fill the role formerly played by the body in sustaining the departed

causal origin of the behaviour of the mind. Just getting a brain that would have that same chemical makeup (or a projector that projects the same image) is not enough to make the emergent mind the same in both cases.

³⁰ Hasker, *Metaphysics*, 79.

soul somewhat strange, if explicable at all. Just as, according to Hasker, a body must retain spatial-temporal continuity in order to remain the same body, surely too an emergent mind, physical in the sense just described, must retain spatio-temporal continuity in order to remain the same mind. If this is so, then Hasker cannot, like a traditional dualist, conceive of the mind as being in heaven at the moment of death. If it remains emergent but emergent on God (setting aside any problem this might involve as suggested above), the mind is still in the brain at the point of death, and must begin a journey *through space* to get wherever (if anywhere) it is going (exactly where a mind-field might be going is an odd enough question in its own right), and wherever that is will also be a location somewhere in space. The idea of angels sitting around on clouds is, of course, a caricature of Christian conceptions of heaven, but what Hasker must maintain is perhaps more strange still – a gathering of fields (or something like fields) somewhere in the universe like a school of cosmic jellyfish huddled somewhere in the ocean of the universe until their journey back to earth when it is time to – somehow – become emergent on another physical body (that is, to become a product of a new body’s being arranged and functioning in just the right way), as if the *first* transfer were not difficult enough to conceive of.

Hasker may, of course, object to me talking about an emergent mind as physical. In fact he appears to offer just such an objection:

All this [description of emergentism], of course, leaves the precise nature of the causal processes involving the conscious mind very much a mystery. That this should be so is unavoidable in the present state of knowledge. But I will hazard one further conjecture: on the hypothesis of emergent dualism, it is almost inevitable to conceive of these interactions as involving exchange of energy between mind and brain. It is predictable that this will provoke the objection that the mind, the field of consciousness, is “physical after all.” My response to this is that little hangs on a name: if philosophers are prepared to stretch the meaning of “physical” to encompass everything that has been said [of emergentism], then so be it. What is not acceptable, however, is for someone to take the claim, thus arrived at, that “the mind is physical” and use it as a premise from which to infer other characteristics of the conscious mind that are contrary to the ones postulated in this chapter. The distinction between mind and body as conceived of here is simply different from that contemplated either by Cartesian dualism or by contemporary forms of materialism: the new wine can't safely be kept in those old, dry wineskins.³¹

³¹ Hasker, *The Emergent Self*, 200-201.

However, philosophers cannot (at least, not successfully) merely *stipulate* their way out of trouble. If there are key premises in emergentism (as I have argued that there are) that commit it to a view wherein the mind is physical in the sense I have said it is, then that this conclusion may be contrary to other things the emergentist says is nobody's problem except the emergentist's, and he may not just request that the rest of us ignore them.

In fairness, I cannot show that it is impossible that there is a gathering of spatially located minds out there in the spatial universe, awaiting the resurrection of the dead. While strange, I have already stressed that strangeness is not to be confused with impossibility. Nor, for that matter, have I conclusively proven that the mind, in emergentism, is intrinsically spatial and could never be otherwise. But as something emergent on a brain, seeing the mind spatial is certainly the most intuitive way of seeing it, and the onus of explanation would fall to anyone who says that the very same mind that was *generated* by a brain can then become non-spatial.

Closing Thoughts

Once upon a time Blaise Pascal said that there is "nothing so inconceivable as to say that matter knows itself," and his reason for saying so was that "It is impossible to imagine how it should know itself."³² Today, few would make so strong a claim. Moreover, mistakes are made when we slip from our own inability to conceive of something into a dogmatic claim that something is logically incoherent. I cannot conceive of a mind that really is emergent surviving the death of the body on which it was emergent as Hasker suggests, and I do not think any of Hasker's arguments or analogies make the idea any more understandable or plausible. More than that, it looks to me like the idea really *is* logically incoherent, but I admit that I could be wrong. It is possible that I simply am not being creative enough, or that there are facts of which we are simply not aware that would, once discovered, enable us to conceive of an emergent mind surviving bodily death. For now, perhaps I

³² Pascal, *Pensées*, #72.

will have to be content with the fact that, as Hasker reminds us, reality does not always conform to what I can easily explain. At a bare minimum however, I am absolutely sure that Hasker's claims are not *less* problematic than the claim that physicalism is true and the person who died a thousand years ago will rise again. If in the end (as I suspect is the case) Hasker simply can't conceive of a scenario whereby there could be continuity between the person who died and the person who will rise, I simply plead with him to remember that reality need not conform to what we can easily imagine or understand, for if it *did* so conform, he is going to have to put his head together with those of the physicalists and think harder about how a body-dependent mind can be generated again (and be the same mind) in a resurrected body. On the off chance that reality has a semi-reliable *tendency* to conform in this way, I would suggest such collaboration anyway, just in case.