



Joshua R. Farris and Joanna Leidenhag (Eds.). *The Origin of the Soul: A Conversation*. London and New York: Routledge, 2024, xii + 320pp.

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The anthology *The Origin of the Soul: A Conversation* in the book series *Routledge New Critical Thinking in Religion, Theology and Biblical Studies* contributes to the important debate about the origin of the soul. The book is structured as a conversation between five contemporary scholars, each of them presenting their own view on the origin and metaphysics of the soul, comments on each view, and a final response by every contributor, respectively, resulting in five major sections. Additionally, the renowned philosophers of religion, Charles Taliaferro and Peter van Inwagen, provide a fore- and afterword to the discussion.

The philosophical basis for the conversation is formed on the one hand by the theological theories of the soul's origin. Farris distinguishes three major lines in the introduction: creationism, traducianism, and preexistence (p. 3). On the other hand, the conversation takes its starting point in the preferred metaphysical understanding of consciousness, the mind or the soul proposed by the authors. All five major authors, Joshua Farris, Bruce L. Gordon, Joanna Leidenhag, William Hasker, and James T. Turner, Jr., have in common that they reject the metaphysical framework of materialism or physicalism.

Consequently, the choice of researchers, and thus philosophical positions of how to understand consciousness, is intended to cover all major views on consciousness within the philosophy of mind *except* for physicalism or materialism. Thus, dualist, idealist, panpsychist, emergentist, and, possibly somewhat surprising, hylomorphist views are presented by Farris, Gordon, Leidenhag, Hasker, and Turner, respectively. The choice to exclude a materialist view *may* seem motivated by the fact "that many philosophers and scientists have largely given way to materialism" (p. 2), by the intention to specifically discuss the origin of the *soul*, and by the fact that the anthology is mainly directed towards readers with a theological interest and background.

The reader may wonder whether the five metaphysical frameworks of dualism, idealism, panpsychism, emergentism, and hylomorphism have not already been extensively discussed elsewhere in academia. Here, however, one of the original contributions of the anthology already becomes apparent. Firstly, the carefully chosen authors do not present standard versions of their metaphysical frameworks but rather specific interesting varieties of them. Gordon, for example, in his quantum-

informational idealism, attempts to link 'traditional' idealism to quantum physics. Secondly, each view is related to a specific understanding of the origin of the soul. Furthermore, the conversation with five times four comments and a final response deepens the readers' understanding of each view, highlights possible weaknesses in each specific view, and shows how a proponent of the view may adequately respond to the critics directed at his/her position. Thus, apart from providing an overview of possible positions of the origin of the soul, the anthology also provides a pedagogically elegant way of diving into each of the defended positions.

First out is Farris with his Neo-Cartesian dualism. He proposes the primacy of the mental and attempts to ground the origin of the soul, despite apparent problems, in an emergentist creationist view to account for both the parents and God's role in the process of becoming a human being (pp. 18–22). Moreover, Farris introduces the concept of "obscure dualism" in order to draw a dividing line between Russellian monism, panpsychism, hylomorphism, and his own view (pp. 15–16). While the respondents generally agree or sympathize with Farris's arguments for the primacy of the mental, Farris's use of the concept of bare particulars (Gordon and Turner), the concept of obscure dualism (Leidenhag and Hasker), and emergence are criticized (Leidenhag). Farris replies mainly to Gordon's and Turner's objection to Farris's use of bare particulars. Farris furthermore argues that any view is in need of metaphysical categories, bare particulars being one of them.

Gordon introduces his quantum-informational idealism. At the core of his contribution lies his argument and conviction that quantum physics ultimately leads to the metaphysical position of idealism (pp. 58–63). Given the primacy of the mental and God as *the* efficient cause (p. 61), Gordon ends up arguing for a combination of creationism and traducianism. Finally, he relates his view to a biblical background (pp. 74–75). The critical comments directed at Gordon's idealism are that bodies actually exist mind-independently (Farris), and physical realism should be endorsed (Hasker).

Furthermore, the combination of creationism and traducianism is regarded as questionable (Leidenhag and Turner). Also, the question is raised whether science should be a guide to metaphysics (Turner) and whether God would have to be construed as deceptive (Turner) in Gordon's view. In his reply, which has very lengthy end-notes, Gordon argues that *all* causation should be understood as agent causation, thus again emphasizing the primacy of the mental (p. 104) and that metaphysical and critical realism can be combined (p. 102). Gordon further explains why it is reasonable to constrain metaphysics by quantum physics (p. 103) and develops some further links to orthodox Christianity (pp. 110–112).

In the third part, Leidenhag combines panpsychism with traducianism. She elaborates how panpsychism does *not* stand in conflict with Christian tradition since, in both cases, the mental is assumed to be fundamental (pp. 125–127). After explicating how panpsychist traducianism can be construed in the Christian tradition, Leidenhag turns to the central problem of panpsychism, namely the combination problem of how rudimentary mental entities can combine to form consciousness, the mind or a soul, seeking support for her view in Tononi's Integrated Information Theory (IIT) (pp. 129–138). Unsurprisingly, the main criticism among all respondents is mainly directed at the combination problem. The respondents deem that the combination problem parallels the issues materialism has in explaining consciousness and that the view of

consciousness arising from rudimentary mental entities stands in opposition to the substantial immaterial soul, personal identity, and the unity of consciousness. Leidenhag replies by further elaborating on one of the central tenets of panpsychism; that consciousness cannot arise out of non-mental parts, and by arguing how composition does not oppose identity.

Hasker defends a combination of emergentism and dualism. His starting point is the refutation of idealism, materialism, and Cartesian dualism (pp. 182–188). He then proceeds with a brief description of the concept of emergence (pp. 189–190) and argues that “mental substance, a new individual entity,” emerges from matter (p. 191). Quite obviously, the refutation of idealism is rejected in the comments on Hasker’s text (Gordon). More specifically, critique is directed at the principle of emergence. It is claimed that Hasker’s view cannot account for the existence of souls (Farris). Furthermore, the closeness of Hasker’s position to panpsychism and hylomorphism is emphasized (Leidenhag). A more theologically oriented critique points out that emergent dualism cannot account for bodily resurrection (Turner). Hasker deems that one of the more important objections to emergence is that it is “explanatory vacuous” (p. 222). Indeed, it seems that any reductive explanation of emergence would exclude the strong emergence proposed by Hasker. Hasker, however, argues that there are laws known by God that allow such strong emergence to occur *without* either, on the one hand, collapsing into a reductive explanation or, on the other hand, turning into ‘brute’ emergence.

Finally, Turner presents his hylomorphistic approach to the question of the origin of the soul. He provides a simple three-step argument for one of his central claims that “souls are not created” (p. 225). Turner subsequently develops this argument to show that souls are neither created out of nothing nor “the result of a particular kind of change” (p. 229) and provides further support for the premises that souls are not things and what is not a thing is not created (pp. 230–232). Lastly, he argues that Christian theologians should think that creationism and traducianism are false (pp. 233–236). The respondents point out that Turner departs from tradition in his denial of any form of creationism (Farris), that Turner’s hylomorphism faces empirical challenges both from neuroscience (Farris) and from quantum physics (Gordon), and that it fails to explain the term soul (Hasker).

Moreover, it is stated that hylomorphism has been abandoned in history in favor of other metaphysical frameworks (Hasker). Furthermore, the suggestion is made that panpsychism and hylomorphism may join forces since they provide answers to different questions (Leidenhag). In his reply, Turner interprets the critique involving empirical challenges as giving priority to science. Consequently, he rejects the view of giving priority to physics rather than metaphysics.

Generally, the comments and replies are friendly yet critical. As is common in academic discourse, the authors also attempt to find commonalities even between views seemingly standing in greater opposition to each other. Leidenhag’s responses stand out in the sense that they more clearly strive for constructive dialogue and criticism rather than simply finding weaknesses in or rejecting the opponent’s views.

All in all, the anthology can be highly recommended to anyone interested in the philosophy of mind in general or, more specifically, in the origin of the soul in a theological setting. Furthermore, the conversation format contributes positively to the

understanding of the overall topic and can be recommended in areas with a similar broad variety of possible positions. Possibly, the choice of the editors not to include a materialist view is a drawback. After all, there are Christian materialists, such as the author of the afterword, Peter van Inwagen, who presumably also have developed views on the origin of the soul. Also, despite the fact that several authors in different ways relate their metaphysical framework to contemporary research in the natural sciences, a more thorough discussion of how the proposed views successfully can be integrated or made compatible with, for example, research within neuroscience would have been of great value.

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