

TWEAKING DALLAS WILLARD'S ONTOLOGY OF THE HUMAN PERSON



J. P. MORELAND
Talbot School of Theology

Abstract. While my own philosophical views are largely in keeping with my mentor, Dallas Willard, nevertheless, I find his conception of the human person puzzling, hard to specify precisely, and *prima facie* contradictory in a few places. Dallas's central goal in formulating his anthropology was to develop a model that shed light on, allowed for deeper insight into, and fostered interest in spiritual formation, especially the role of the body in spiritual maturation. I share this goal, and agree with most of his model. But in what follows, I will make more precise what his views were, try to clear up what, *prima facie*, seem to be contradictions in his theory, and, finally, recommend an alternative that captures the central concerns Dallas had for his own position. Thus, I will lay out a few general points of Dallas's ontology (points with which I agree), provide a description of his philosophical/theological anthropology, along with two problems that seem to be present, and offer a slightly adjusted alternative to his position that accomplishes his main goal (regarding spiritual formation) in a way with which I believe he would be satisfied.

I had the privilege of doing my PhD under Dallas—he was my dissertation supervisor—and, subsequently, along with my wife, Hope, of being close friends of Dallas and Jane from 1985 until the time of his departure. When church history looks back on this time period, the movements in philosophy and spiritual formation he generated will, no doubt, place him among a very small handful of influential names for the Kingdom.

My own philosophical views are largely in keeping with his. But I find his views of the human person puzzling, hard to specify precisely, and *prima facie* contradictory in a few places. This is an odd situation in which to be since Dallas was a deep philosophical genius and a standout wordsmith in his manner of presentation. I tell my students that at places where I disagree with Thomas Aquinas, I must be wrong so do not trust my teaching. I feel the same way about Dallas's teaching. Yet I cannot escape the sense that my observations are correct.

Dallas had two goals in formulating his anthropology. First, he wanted to get at the truth of the matter. Consequently, he used reason and Scripture very carefully in developing his views to increase the odds that his

position was a set of justified true assertions. Second, he wanted his model to shed light on, allow for deeper insight into, and foster interest in spiritual formation, especially the role of the body in spiritual maturation. I share these goals and, in fact, I actually agree with most of his model. But in what follows, I will make more precise what his views were, I shall try to clear up what, *prima facie*, seem to be contradictions in his theory, and, finally, recommend an alteration that captures the central concerns Dallas had for his own model. So, in what follows, I will, first, lay out a few general points of Dallas's ontology (points with which I agree), then offer a description of his philosophical/theological anthropology, along with two problems that seem to be present in his system, and, finally, offer a slightly adjusted alternative to his that accomplishes his second goal (regarding spiritual formation) in a way with which I believe he would be satisfied.

GENERAL CONTOURS OF WILLARD'S ONTOLOGY RELEVANT TO HIS ANTHROPOLOGY

Dallas was smart enough to know that you do not sit down and develop an ontology *ex nihilo* without relying on the sages of the past. Now Dallas was definitely a fan of Plato, but in my view, two streams of thought influenced his ontology the most: the works of Edmund Husserl and the metaphysics of Aristotle and the late Medieval Aristotelians, including Thomas Aquinas.¹

1. *Substance*. In the *Categories*, Aristotle clarified two different senses of "substance": primary substance (e.g., Socrates, a particular dog) and secondary substance (humanness, doghood). Dallas follows Aristotle in this distinction and, accordingly, there are two very different ways of using the term.² First, a substance is an individual thing that has properties and dispositions natural to it (i.e., as part of its essence), endures through time and change, and receives and exercises causal influence on other things.³ The paradigm case of a substance in this sense is a living thing, e.g., a human person. Second, substance can refer to a thing's essence, a range of actual and potential properties (i) such that the thing could not exist if it lost one of these properties; (ii) that answer the most fundamental

¹ Dallas was, of course, an expert on and admirer of Husserl, and in *Spirit of the Disciplines* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 82, he explicitly makes reference to phenomenological writers and their influence. In the same book, 88, he also mentions the importance of Aristotelian thought for his own views.

² In her otherwise excellent work, *A Dallas Willard Dictionary* (Soul Training Publications, 2013) by Elane O'Rourke, the entry "Substance" is quite confused.

³ Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission* (New York: New York: 2006), 138.

question: What kind of thing is this? Here, “fundamental” means that the essence characterizes what kind of thing something is as long as it exists. Thus, Joe is a teenager kind of thing and a human-person kind of thing, but being a teenager will not characterize Joe throughout his existence while human-person does. Thus, the latter and not the former is an essence.

2. *Properties.* A property (attribute, quality) is a universal (something that can be non-spatially in, exemplified, possessed by many things at the same time.) Thus, redness or humanity can be had by more than one thing simultaneously. Also, properties are abstract objects (they are not in space and time). Finally, Dallas accepted constituent realism regarding properties (and relations). According to constituent realism, properties (and relations) are universals that, when exemplified (and they need not be to exist), become constituents of the ordinary particulars that have them. Thus, if the mind exemplifies a mental property, say, the property of being a thought of London, then that property enters into the very being of the mind as a metaphysical constituent.⁴
3. *Relations.* Dallas also held that relations (being larger than, being sweeter than, being brighter than) were universals and abstract objects. He divided relations into internal and external. If something, A (say the color yellow) stands in an internal relation (brighter than) to B (say the color purple), then anything that did not stand in that relation to B could not be A. So if any color was not brighter than purple, it could not be the color yellow. If a thing X stands in an internal relation to another thing Y, then part of what makes X the very thing it is, is that it stands in that relation to Y. X could not exist if it did not stand in that relation to Y. External relations are those that are not internal, that is, if A (a ball) stands in the external relation “on-top-of” to B (a table), then A (the ball) could cease to stand in that relation to B (by, say, falling on the floor and, thus, being in the lower-than relation to B, the table) and still exist.
4. *Parts.* There are two kinds of parts relevant to our discussion—separable and inseparable.

p is a *separable part* of some whole $W =_{\text{def.}}$ *p* is a particular, *p* is a part of *W* and *p* can exist if it is not a part of *W*.

p is an *inseparable part* of some whole $W =_{\text{def.}}$ *p* is a particular, *p* is a part of *W* and *p* cannot exist if it is not a part of *W*.

Inseparable parts get their existence and identity from the whole of which they are parts. The paradigm case of an inseparable part in this tradition is a (monadic) property-instance or relation-instance.

⁴ See Dallas Willard, “How Concepts Relate the Mind to its Objects: The ‘God’s Eye View,’” *Philosophia Christi* 1 (Spring): 5–20.

Thus, if substance *s* has property *P*, the-having-of-*P*-by-*s* is (1) a property-instance of *P*; (2) an inseparable part of *s* which we may also call a mode of *s*. For example, let *s* be a chunk of clay, *P* be the property of being round, and the-having-of-*P*-by-*s* be the clay's being round. The clay could exist without being round, and the property of being round could exist without there being clay (e.g., a baseball could have that property), but the clay's being round could not exist without the clay. The clay's being round is a mode or inseparable part of the clay.

5. *Faculties*. The human person has literally thousands of capacities within its structure, most of which that person is not currently actualizing or using. But the human person is not just a collection of isolated, discrete, randomly related capacities. Rather, the various capacities within the human person fall into natural groupings called *faculties* of the human person. In order to get hold of this, think for a moment about this list of capacities: the ability to see red, see orange, hear a dog bark, hear a tune, think about math, think about God, desire lunch, desire a family. The ability to see red is more closely related to the ability to see orange than it is to the ability to think about math. We express this insight by saying that the abilities to see red or orange are parts of the same faculty—the faculty of sight. The ability to think about math is a capacity within the thinking faculty, viz., the mind. In general, *a faculty is an inseparable part/mode of the human person that contains a natural family of related capacities*.

In sum, these metaphysical notions formed the core of Dallas's ontology, and they were constantly in his mind as he regularly used them to work on specific issues in philosophy, e.g., what is an atom, what is time, what is a human person.⁵

DALLAS'S VIEW OF THE HUMAN PERSON

It is clear that Dallas was a substance dualist in the sense that the person or self is a spiritual or personal substance not identical to his body.⁶

⁵ To my knowledge, there is no single place that Dallas spelled out his general ontology in summary fashion. But if the reader is interested in seeing where Dallas stated and used these philosophical notions, then go to www.dwillard.org and look at his philosophical articles, especially the ones involving Husserl. See also, Willard, *Logic and the Objectivity of Knowledge* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1984).

⁶ See Dallas Willard, "Intentionality and the Substance of the Self," (presented paper, Society of Christian Philosophers, APA, San Francisco, CA, April 4, 2007), esp. page 1.

However, although Dallas does say in one place, “You are a nonphysical reality with a physical body,”⁷ nevertheless, he was not a Cartesian dualist. He expresses agreement with phenomenological and existentialist writings in “denying that the body is ‘just physical,’ just some more or less *mechanical* device incidentally associated with a purely spiritual mind or self.”⁸ Speaking of the (Platonic and Cartesian) dichotomy between the non-physical part (the soul, spirit, self) and the purely physical part (the body) of the person, Elane O’Rourke flatly states, “Dallas did not accept this dichotomy...This means that we are not essentially spirits or souls who happen to be lodged *in* bodies...”⁹

Dallas is a bit unclear as to what he thinks we are, sometimes calling us humans, sometimes persons, and sometimes, human persons. The reason this is important is because some thinkers, e.g., John Locke, believed one could be a human without being a person, and in the intermediate state one was a person and not a human. And Thomas Aquinas believed that when, say, Peter died, he did not survive into the afterlife; rather, his soul did. But his soul was capable of sustaining Peter’s identity such that when his soul was reunited with his resurrection body, he was a human person again.¹⁰ But I think the corpus of Dallas’s work would favor calling us human persons (hereafter, just persons). The person is the fundamental unit of analysis in that the person is a substance and the other dimensions/aspects are seated in or dependent upon the person.¹¹

In addition, Dallas clarifies five features (dimensions, aspects, elements) of the person: soul, social context, body, mind (thoughts and feelings), spirit (heart or will).¹² These five constitute the essence of human nature.¹³ The terms “features,” “dimensions,” or “aspects,” are not very precise, but fortunately, Dallas clarifies things when he claims that these five are inseparable from every human life.¹⁴ From this statement and knowledge of his general ontology, it is safe to say that these five are faculties of the person understood as inseparable parts or modes of the person. Thus, for example, a body that is not a mode of a person is not a body; it is a corpse. And when the human person is living, the body is actually a faculty of the soul, a set of powers and capacities for developing and structuring the body. I

⁷ Dallas Willard, *Living in Christ's Presence* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 117.

⁸ Willard, *Spirit of the Disciplines*, 82.

⁹ O’Rourke, *A Dallas Willard Dictionary*, 29.

¹⁰ Cf. Christopher Brown, *Aquinas and the Ship of Theseus* (New York: Continuum, 2005).

¹¹ Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2002), 30–39.

¹² Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, chap. 2.

¹³ Gary Black Jr., *The Theology of Dallas Willard* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013), 100.

¹⁴ Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, 30.

will touch more on this below when I clarify my own view of the human person.

While all five of these modes of a person are crucial, there are two of them that, in my view, require special mention: the body and the soul.

Dallas's treatment of the nature of the body and its role in spiritual formation may well have been his most important contribution to reflections on sanctification. When *Spirit of the Disciplines* burst on the scene in 1988, it forever changed how many of us view spiritual growth. For Dallas, the body is a part of the image of God in us, and it is a power pack, a source of independent power by way of which we can interact with the world and make a difference in it.¹⁵ Human personal relations cannot be separated from the body.¹⁶

In a few places, Dallas says something that, *prima facie*, is quite shocking. He says, "In an important sense to be explained, a person *is* his or her body."¹⁷ Again, "The union of spirituality with the fullness of human life finds its deepest ground in the identification of the person with his or her body."¹⁸ Finally, "*Human personality is not separable in our consciousness from the human body. And that fact is expressed by asserting the IDENTITY of the person as his or her body.*"¹⁹

Below, I will provide reasons for not taking these statements as literal assertions of the identity of a human person and his or her body. For present purposes, it seems best to understand Dallas as saying that the body is not a mere container in which we live. No, we are far more intimately related to the body than that and, according to Dallas, it is not an exaggeration to say that the spiritual formation of the body is crucial to our growth as disciples. To explain how Dallas conceives of this, it may be wise to note a statement he makes in the midst of these identity assertions. He claims that phenomenological and existential writers of the recent past have argued that the body is not simply a "physical thing"; in fact, there is far more to a living body than matter.²⁰

For Dallas, different parts/regions of the body contained two things relevant to spiritual health. The first are meanings and sensations that occupy specific parts of the body.²¹ For example, upon meeting someone of whom you are jealous, there might arise a sensation of a certain sort in your stomach or shoulders. This sensation would have a specific texture and location, and it may be associated with the meaning, "I am such a looser.

¹⁵ Willard, *Spirit of the Disciplines*, 52–53.

¹⁶ Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, 35.

¹⁷ Willard, *Spirit of the Disciplines*, 76.

¹⁸ Willard, *Spirit of the Disciplines*, 82.

¹⁹ Willard, *Spirit of the Disciplines*, 84. Italics original.

²⁰ Willard, *Spirit of the Disciplines*, 82.

²¹ The first person to develop an entire approach to therapy based on this insight was Eugene T. Gendlin, *Focusing* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987).

Why can't I be like him?" Brute physical matter—the kind that can be completely described in the language of physics, chemistry, neuroscience and biology—is not capable of having sensations and meanings in it. It is only if there is more to the body than its physicality that it can have sensations and meanings. From personal conversations with Dallas and from his general metaphysical views, the following is beyond reasonable doubt for Dallas: It is because the body is informed and diffused by the immaterial, substantial person that the body can have these things.

Second, Dallas noted that various parts of the body contain grooves, ingrained habits formed through repeated practice of some sort to constitute character. Thus, spiritual growth requires the repeated practice of various disciplines in order to replace the old groove with a new one in keeping with the nature of the Kingdom. In this way, the body is literally formed in a new way by obtaining a new character consisting of habits stored as grooves in various body parts.²²

Finally, we turn to Dallas's teaching on the soul. In my opinion, this area of his anthropology is the most puzzling. The best thing to say at this point is that for Dallas, the soul is a mode or inseparable part of the person, taken as an unanalyzable primitive entity, just like the other four modes, except that the soul is the deepest aspect of the person. Moreover, it is a non-physical mode that *resides in* the person (and in this sense, the person is the seat of the soul), yet the soul, while an aspect of the person, functions to bring together and unify into one life the activities of all the other dimensions. In this way, the soul is the source and coordinating principle of the person's life. Dallas's favorite illustration of the soul was to liken it to a computer that quietly runs a business or manufacturing operation and only comes to our attention when it malfunctions. Without the soul, the other modes of the person would fragment and go their own way.²³

²² Steve Porter has pointed out that elsewhere [see *Hearing God* (1984; repr., Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009)] Dallas says our old routines of feeling, thought, belief, and so forth are stored in the heart/mind. In my view, in *Hearing God*, Dallas was not attempting to provide a full explanation for how these things are stored in the heart and mind. He simply wanted to state the fact that they are and that Christ can and does replace them. But in *Spirit of the Disciplines*, Dallas does give a fuller picture of how these mental states are stored, namely, as dispositions of, say, the mind, and the dispositions to think certain ways are grooves in the brain that are or ground these mental dispositions.

²³ The information in this paragraph is repeated by Dallas in a number of places: *Renovation of the Heart*, 37–38; 199–216; “The Texture and Substance of the Human Soul,” (presented paper Biola Philosophy Group, Biola University, November 22, 1994); “Grey Matter and the Soul,” *Christianity Today*, November 18, 2002; “Spiritual Disciplines, Spiritual Formation, and the Restoration of the Soul,” *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 26 (Spring 1998): 101–109; O'Rourke, *A Dallas Willard Dictionary*, 243–246; Black, *The Theology of Dallas Willard*, 107.

Dallas said so much about these matters that it would take an entire book to do him justice. Still, I think this précis of his thought is accurate and adequate for my purposes. If there are places where I have misunderstood Dallas's thought, I would love to have that pointed out to me. I now turn to two possible difficulties in his philosophical/theological anthropology.

TWO POSSIBLE DIFFICULTIES IN DALLAS'S PHILOSOPHICAL/ THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

A Person's Relationship to His Body. As I said above, Dallas made the claim that we are to be identified with our bodies.²⁴ But this cannot be what he meant because he identified four other modes, alongside the body, that constitute the human self. I think this alleged problem is capable of a fairly easy resolution. When Dallas said this, he meant the following: (1) The human body is more than physical, so in a real sense, I am more closely related to my body than in the container model, i.e., the body is purely a physical container into which my soul has been inserted.²⁵ (2) My body is essential to my identity.²⁶ In fact, it is a part of the image of God in me.²⁷ (3) Human personal relations cannot be separated from my body, and human personality is not separable in our consciousness from the human body.²⁸

To sum up, Dallas is emphasizing the closeness we have to our (more than physical) bodies and how crucial the body is to our development. But the way he puts all this raises a difficulty: If we take these statements at face value, then it means that there is no disembodied intermediate state at death. If we continue to survive between death and final resurrection, we will need to be given a temporary body, which implies that, contrary to Dallas's teaching, my current body is not, in fact, essential to me, and I can continue to engage in personal relationships without my current body.

Moreover, there are reasons to believe that Dallas did believe in a disembodied intermediate state between death and final resurrection.²⁹

²⁴ Willard, *Spirit of the Disciplines*, 76, 82, 84.

²⁵ Willard, *Spirit of the Disciplines*, 82; *Grey Matter and the Soul*.

²⁶ Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, 161.

²⁷ Willard, *Spirit of the Disciplines*, 52–53.

²⁸ Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, 35; *Spirit of the Disciplines*, 84.

²⁹ Though, as Gary Black has told me, sometimes Dallas talked about the possibility of having a sort of ethereal, glowing body that was made out of light; now, some Near Death Experiencers report something like this, but such a body is so different than the one we have now, that it becomes hard to see how our current body, with its particular makeup to serve as a dimension, along with all the other dimensions making up human personhood, is as essential to the tasks Dallas assigns it, since these tasks can be accomplished with a radically different body, one, in fact, that is more like light than a more substantial body.

For one thing, Dallas explicitly says, “When we pass through the stage normally called ‘death,’ we will not lose anything but the limitations and powers that specifically correspond to our present mastery over our body, and to our availability and vulnerability to and through it. We will no longer be able to act and be acted upon by means of it.”³⁰ Later, he says, “Our experience will be much clearer, richer, and deeper, of course, because it will be unstrained by the limitations now imposed upon us by our dependence upon our body.”³¹

For another thing, Dallas was a believer in the general truthfulness of many, if not most, Near Death Experiences.³² In fact, he regularly taught a course on life after death at USC, and one of his regular texts—one he told me he agreed with—was Jeffrey Long’s *Evidence of the Afterlife* (New York, New York: HarperOne, 2010). As Long points out, while some NDE experiences report receiving some sort of heavenly body, the majority claim that during the experience they existed without any body; this is true for almost every NDE experiencer while they are still in the room with their dead corpse watching what is going on. However, if one exists after death in a disembodied state, and if the body is part of the image of God, then the disembodied human person will not exemplify the full image of God during that time, and this result seems troubling. Disembodied existence also shows that human personal relationships do, indeed, take place without a body and consciousness and human personality can function quite nicely with no body at all.

But maybe there is a further way out here. It may be that Dallas is speaking in these sources like a pastor and not like a philosopher. Now it seems to be rare for Dallas to divide these, but in these sources he may have been less than precise in some of his word usage in order to communicate. So when he says that my body is essential to my identity and part of the image of God in me, perhaps he meant to say that, while embodied, my body is crucial to my identity, and that while I can be in the image of God without my body, nevertheless, the body is an important part of that image. I do

³⁰ Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy* (New York: HarperCollins, 1998), 394.

³¹ Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 395. To be sure, on page 396 of the same book, Dallas does interpret 2 Corinthians 5:1–8 as saying that when we die and our “earthly tent is torn down,” we are not thereby deprived of a body because “we will be clothed with a dwelling place of the heavenly sort” (a new body) and, thus, will not be “left naked” (disembodied). Since Dallas was such a careful scholar, I am not clear as to exactly what he is saying here. Why? Because most commentators who take this text in an ontological sense as does Dallas, claim that Paul is expressing his desire to be around at the second coming of Christ so his new body will be given to him immediately and he will not have to go through a period of disembodiment, a possibility that Paul clearly affirms in this text (cf. vs. 3, 4). The real possibility of disembodiment in this text seems clear and surely Dallas recognized that the text taught this.

³² Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, 397.

not know what else to say, so I leave it to the reader to ponder the issues I have surfaced.³³ But if there are ways to clarify alleged problematic aspects of Dallas's view of the body, I think that two difficulties with his teaching on the soul will be much harder to dismiss.

The Person and His Soul. It is clear that Dallas taught that the soul was a mode of the person just like the other four in his diagram in *Renovation of the Heart*, though it was for him a special mode. The soul is the deepest "aspect" of the person, seated in that person, and the integrator and unifier of the different components of the person.

On the other hand, Dallas clearly states in some places that the soul is an individual substance in its own right. As O'Rourke points out, for Dallas, unlike the other aspects of the person, the soul "has independent life and substance: souls can exist without the body, mind, will, or interaction."³⁴ Elsewhere, Dallas says, "The soul is, as professor Moreland indicates, a substance, in the sense that it is an individual entity that has properties and dispositions natural to it, endures through time and change, and receives and exercises causal influence on other things, most notably *the person* of which it is the most fundamental part."³⁵

Here, Dallas is approvingly citing an article I wrote in the same issue of *The Journal of Psychology and Theology* in which I explicitly define the classic definition of a substance (one Dallas accepted), claim that the soul is such a substance, and identify the person with the soul.³⁶ From Aristotle to the present, there is a fundamental axiom for those who accept the classic understanding of substance: No substance contains another substance within its being. As Aristotle put it, "No substance is composed of substances."³⁷ From this, it follows that substances cannot have separable

³³ Steve Porter suggests that, perhaps, Dallas was distinguishing minimal personhood, which continues to exist apart from the body, and full-fledged personhood, which requires a body. So we are still minimally persons in a disembodied state, but we are not full-fledged or fully-operational persons. As Porter rightly points out, there is a long tradition that there is something lacking/unnatural about the disembodied state. That may be what Dallas is after. And he is highlighting it because of the tendency Christians have to denigrate the role of the body. This may be right, but it is a stretch that I do not think matches Dallas's language. He knew very well what it means to say something (the body) is essential to something else (the person, the image of God): a thing cannot exist without those things that are essential to its existence. So I suspect that Dallas did not intend this gloss on his statements.

³⁴ O'Rourke, *A Dallas Willard Dictionary*, 243.

³⁵ Willard, "Spiritual Disciplines, Spiritual Formation, and the Restoration of the Soul," 101.

³⁶ J. P. Moreland, "Restoring the Substance to the Soul of Psychology," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 26 (March 1998): 29–43.

³⁷ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* VII.16, 1041a4–5. Cf. *Metaphysics* VII.13, 1039a7–8. See also, Robert Pasnau, *Metaphysical Themes: 1274–1671* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2011), 607–610; Brown, *Aquinas and the Ship of Theseus*, 53–57, 72–73, 87–90.

parts because such are substances. When Dallas says here that the soul is a part of the human person, he cannot mean here “inseparable part” or “mode” as he does elsewhere because he has already called the soul a substance in this citation and not a mode. By the way, the reason that a substance cannot have another substance as a constituent is that such entities that do have substances as separable parts are not substances but ordered aggregates like a car or house. Such entities do not have the unity required of a real substance (e.g., if an ordered aggregate gains or loses a part it is literally a different thing). If the soul is a substance, the unity of the person is lost because one substance (the person) contains another substance (the soul) as a substantial, separable part. Instead, the person becomes an ordered aggregate.

There is a second difficulty with the soul in Dallas's teaching: in the Aristotelian tradition, the integrative, unifying role of the soul is given to the constituting individuated essence or species of the living organism—e.g., the human person—not to some mode among other modes within the living thing. Thus, the human person is the soul and the various faculties—mind, volition, emotion, body, etc.—are seated in and unified by the individuated essence. If this is true, there is no unifying work left for a mode of the substance (the human person) to perform.

It is interesting to note that Dallas seemed to identify the underlying unifier of an individual substance with its (individuated) essence. In an advanced class I took with Dallas at USC in the Fall of 1982 entitled “The Metaphysics of Substance,” Dallas gave out (an unpublished) handout he had written for the class entitled “Nominalism and the Theory of Substance.” In it, he says that the substance (here he means essence or species) of a thing stands under the individual substance constituted by that essence. He then goes on to say, “It is better to follow Aristotle in taking the substance (ousia) of a thing to be that *within* it which governs its career of existing, and thus supports or stands under it. The substance (Note: essence) in this sense was taken by Aristotle to be its *species*, a special sub-set of its properties which provides the framework for all of the other properties which it may, must, or cannot have.”

I hope these issues will become clearer as I try to develop an alternative model of the human person that is very similar to Dallas's and that accomplishes the things of concern to him as he developed his own model. There seem to be three such concerns: (1) The human person is an immaterial substance with a deep unity beyond that of an ordered aggregate or mere collection of atoms and molecules. (2) The various modes of the human person (mind, will, etc.) can become fragmented and, yet, they were meant to function in a deep unity and this can be achieved through various practices. (3) The body is not just a physical container for the human person; no, it is more than just physical such that meanings, feelings, and habituated dispositions reside in it and it is deeply integrated with the human person. I turn, now, to my own model to see if I can capture these concerns.

A THOMISTIC-LIKE TWEAKING OF DALLAS'S ANTHROPOLOGY

The Soul. The human soul (hereafter, simply soul) is a simple (containing no separable parts), spatially unextended substance that contains the capacities for consciousness and for animating, enlivening, and developing teleologically its body. The essence of the soul is constituted by determinate/determinable properties, viz., human personhood. Thus, being a human is a sufficient condition for being a person. The faculties of the soul (e.g., the mind, will, spirit, emotions, powers to produce and enliven a body) are inseparable parts/modes of the soul containing a group of naturally resembling powers/capacities. The essence of the soul grounds membership in a thing's natural kind and it should be understood in terms of Aristotelian essentialism. Thus, it is because Joe has the essence "human personhood" that he is classified in the class of human persons instead of, say, penguins.

The late Medieval Aristotelians (1225–1671) drew a distinction between a thick particular (the entire concrete organism including the body; the thin particular plus accidents) and the thin particular (the essence/form, the nexus of exemplification, and an individuator, in their case, prime matter).³⁸ In my view, the human person is identical to his soul (the thin particular) and his soul contains three metaphysical constituents—a human essence, exemplification, and a bare particular.³⁹ The individuated essence of the soul is the ground, developer, unifier, and coordinator of the various modes that are seated as faculties (natural groupings of potentialities/dispositions) within it.

The Body and the Body/Soul Relationship. In this section I will offer an analysis of Aristotelian-style dualism that provides an understanding of the body and the body/soul relationship. I shall call the view Metaphysical Aristotelianism (MA), and while it does not reflect the views of Thomas Aquinas in all its details, it is close enough to be viewed as a Thomistic-like Dualism.

According to MA, living organisms are not mereological aggregates/systems composed of separable parts, bundles of properties, or concrete organisms construed as some sort of whole. Rather, the consensus during this period was that the living organism is a thin particular, viz., an essence exemplified by an individuator (usually prime matter) that stands under (sub-stands) the accidental features of the organism, including its body.⁴⁰ The thin particular is identical to the organism's soul, it is mereologically simple (not composed of separable parts) and metaphysically complex

³⁸ Pasnau, *Metaphysical Themes*, 99–114.

³⁹ J. P. Moreland, "Theories of Individuation: A Reconsideration of Bare Particulars," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 79 (1998): 251–63. Dallas was a huge advocate of bare particulars as a crucial part of his ontology.

⁴⁰ Pasnau, *Metaphysical Themes*, 99–134.

(containing a complex essence, exemplification, and an individuator), and it is hollenmerically present throughout the organism's body (fully present to the body as a whole and fully present at each part of the body.) In this way, according to some models of omnipresence, spatially speaking, the soul is to the body as God is to space in general.

There were four central metaphysical roles played by the thin particular: (1) It grounded the special sort of deep, synchronic unity of living things, especially in comparison to mereological aggregates/systems. (2) It grounded a living thing's ability to be a continuant, sustaining strict, absolute identity through certain changes (including part replacement in the organism's body). (3) It provided the ontological ground for placing the organism in its natural kind and unifying that kind. (4) It unified and developed over time in a law-like way the various modes of the substantial soul.

Another feature of MA, is the central importance of the body for the functioning of the thin particular's (soul's) powers in the normal course of things and the actualization of its various capacities. Speaking of the human soul, Des Chene observes that, "The human soul is not merely joined with the body in fact. It is the *kind* of soul which, though capable of separate existence...nevertheless by its nature presupposes union with a body, and moreover with a particular kind of body, a body with organs, in order to exercise all its powers—even reason..."⁴¹ Elsewhere, Des Chene notes: "Even the intellect requires, so long as the soul is joined with a body, a certain disposition of the brain."⁴²

Thus, the search for specific neurological causal/functional/dependency conditions associated with the actualization of the soul's capacities for consciousness is not only consistent with, but is entailed by MA. Such a search would not provide information about the intrinsic nature of the capacity or the property it actualizes (e.g., pain) nor about the possessor of that capacity (the soul, not the brain). But it would provide information about the bodily conditions required for its actualization. This form of dualism is quite at home with the existence of contemporary neurological findings.

As Pasnau notes, a further feature of MA is the view that the soul "plays a straightforwardly causal role, explaining both the behavior and the physical structure of an animal's body."⁴³ In this sense, the soul is not only the formal/essential cause of the body, but it also becomes (1) an internal efficient first-moving cause of the development and structure of the body (2) and the teleological guide for that development and structure (thus, function determines form).

Here, the soul is a substance with an essence or inner nature that contains, as a primitive unity, a complicated, structural arrangement of capaci-

⁴¹ Dennis Des Chene, *Life's Form: Late Aristotelian Conceptions of the Soul* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), 71.

⁴² Des Chene, *Life's Form*, 96.

⁴³ Pasnau, *Metaphysical Themes*, 558. Cf., 549, 560–65.

ties/dispositions for developing a body (and, of course, the other faculties or modes). Taken collectively this entire ordered structure is unextended, holoenergetically present throughout the body, and constitutes the soul's principle of activity that governs the precise, ordered sequence of changes that the substance will (normally) go through in the process of growth and development. The various physical/chemical parts and processes (including DNA) are tools—instrumental causes—employed by higher-order biological activities in order to sustain the various functions grounded in the soul. Thus, the soul is the first efficient cause of the body's development as well as the final cause of its functions and structure, which are internally related to the soul's essence.⁴⁴ The functional demands of the soul's essence determine the character of the tools, but they, in turn, constrain and direct the various chemical processes that take place in the body as a whole. In this way, MA implies that the organism as a whole (the soul) is ontologically prior to its bodily parts. This understanding of the soul's essence, along with the soul's holoenergetic presence in and to the body, makes such an essence very similar to the notion of information as it is used in biology today.

Moreover, an organism's parts are inseparable parts that stand in internal relations to other parts and to the soul's individuated essence; they are literally functional entities constituted by their role in the organism as a whole. The body is developed and grows in a teleological way by means of a series of law-like developmental events, rooted in the internal essence of the soul. The first-efficient cause of the characteristics of an organism's body is its soul (which contains a blueprint or information in its individuated essence); the various body parts, including DNA and genes, are important instrumental causes the soul uses to produce the traits that arise. This sort of view, along with the holism with which it is associated is also gaining ascendancy in biology.⁴⁵

In summary, according to the classic Aristotelian view of substance expressed in MA: 1) the organism as a whole (the soul) is ontologically prior to its inseparable parts/modes; 2) the parts of the organism's body stand in internal relations to other parts and to the soul's essence; they are literally functional entities (the heart functions literally to pump blood); 3) the operational functions of the body are rooted in the internal structure of the soul; in this way, the internal structure or essence is the blueprint, the information that is responsible for the body's structure and functions; 4) the body is developed and grows teleologically as a series of

⁴⁴ Cf. Tom Kaiser, "Is DNA the Soul?" (presented paper, West Coast Meeting of the Society for Aristotelian and Thomistic Studies, June 14, 2014). The paper is posted at www.aristotle-aquinas.org.

⁴⁵ See Brian Goodwin, *How the Leopard Changed Its Spots* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994); Michael Denton, Govindasamy Kumaramanickavel, and Michael Legge, "Cells as Irreducible Wholes: The Failure of Mechanism and the Possibility of an Organicism Revival," *Biology and Philosophy* 28 (2013): 31–52.

developmental events that occur in a law-like way rooted in the internal essence of the human soul; 5) the first efficient cause of the characteristics of the human body is the soul, and various body parts, including DNA and genes, are important instrumental causes the soul uses to produce the traits that arise; 6) the body is a mode of the soul (the soul could exist without the body but not conversely; a body without a soul is a corpse), and as such it is an ensouled physical structure; thus, there are two aspects to the body—a soulish, immaterial and a physical aspect.

I now turn to two final reflections. First, I want to explain how conscious states—e.g., thoughts, memories, sensations—are and are not in the body. To begin with, it is important to say that here, as usual, the methods and findings of neuroscience are unable to address the question and, in general, are largely irrelevant to the central questions that constitute philosophy of mind.⁴⁶ To see this, consider the discovery that if one's mirror neurons are damaged, then one cannot feel empathy for another. How are we to explain this? Three empirically equivalent solutions come to mind: (1) strict physicalism (a feeling of empathy is identical to the firings of mirror neurons); (2) mere property dualism (a feeling of empathy is an irreducible state of consciousness in the brain whose obtaining depends on the firing of mirror neurons); (3) substance dualism [a feeling of empathy is an irreducible state of consciousness in the soul whose obtaining depends (while embodied) on the firing of mirror neurons]. No empirical datum can pick out which of these three is correct, nor does an appeal to epistemic simplicity help. Epistemic simplicity is a tie-breaker, and the substance dualist will insist that the arguments and evidence for substance dualism are better than those for the other two options mentioned above.

Now consider a music CD (it would be more technically accurate to employ one of those old, black vinyl records; but for communication purposes, I will stick with a CD). Strictly speaking, there is no music in the CD; there are only grooves. But if the CD is not damaged, when placed in the right retrieval system, the grooves trigger musical sounds. According to my Thomistic-like view, the body is an ensouled physical structure. The soul is fully present at each point of the body, and its essence informs the body and gives it its nature as *living human* body. Thus, for a current human body to be a body, it must have a soulish and a physical dimension to it.

Now certain grooves associated with memories, thoughts, sensations, and so forth are formed and stored in the physical dimension of the body (since the physical aspect of the body is brute matter and a complex aggregate according to physical theory, it cannot literally store conscious

⁴⁶ J. P. Moreland, "A Christian Perspective on the Impact of Modern Science on Philosophy of Mind," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 55 (March 2003): 2–12. It is important to note that Dallas thought the same thing. See <http://www.dwillard.org/articles/artview.asp?artID=117>. Dallas also makes clear in this article that he has no penchant for non-reductive physicalism.

states. Brute matter is just the wrong type of thing to possess consciousness. Moreover, whatever the physical aspect of the body stores is spatially extended, but most, if not all, mental states are unextended). But when these are triggered, whether spontaneously by getting hit in the knee or by the mind searching to bring back a memory, the conscious state will obtain in the soulish aspect of the body. Since the soulish aspect of the body is just the soul being holenmerically present to and in the body, it is the soul that exemplifies conscious properties, not the physical body.

Thus, MA explains and entails the things in Dallas's model that were important to him: (1) The human person is an immaterial substance, viz., the thin particular or soul. (2) The unifying, developing, coordinating entity is the essence of the soul. It contains and organizes/coordinates its various faculties/modes (e.g., mind, emotions), and the body is a mode of the soul like the other faculties. So in my view, there is a unifying factor to the aspects of the human person; it is the essence of the soul, not the soul *per se*. (3) The body is not just physical. The physical aspect of the body contains habitually formed grooves that must be replaced through bodily practices that shape the body's grooves more in accordance with the nature of the Kingdom. The soulish aspect of the body contains meanings, sensations, and other conscious states since the soul is fully present at the place of, say, the sensation, and the body qua soul contains the conscious state.

Dallas's model of the human person is rich and deep. And it has many practical implications for life in the Kingdom. I have tried to clarify certain features of his model that seemed to need such clarification, to surface and provide answers while staying within his model to some problems in need of solution. But certain difficulties regarding his view of the nature and role of the soul seem problematic, at least to me, so I have offered a slightly different model that, I hope, is in the spirit of Dallas's views and that accomplishes the goals he thought to be important.⁴⁷

Author: J. P. Moreland. *Title:* Distinguished Professor of Philosophy; Fellow. *Affiliation:* Talbot School of Theology, Biola University (La Mirada, CA); Martin Institute & Dallas Willard Center at Westmont College (Santa Barbara, CA). *Highest Degree:* PhD, University of Southern California. *Areas of Interest/specialization:* metaphysics, philosophy of mind, spiritual formation.

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