

Stage Theory and Resurrection Replicas

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ABSTRACT: According to John Hick, resurrection is replication. If Fallen is resurrected as Risen, then Risen is a replica of Fallen at the last stage of Fallen's earthly life. But replication is not identity. An endurantist says that diachronic sameness entails identity. So on endurantism, Risen cannot be the same person as Fallen. A worm theorist says that diachronic sameness is co-membership in the same 4D space-time worm. But there is no 4D worm that contains both Risen and Fallen. So on worm theory, Risen cannot be the same person as Fallen. A stage theorist says diachronic sameness is a temporal counterpart relation. If stage theory is right, then Hick can defend the view that Risen is the same person as Fallen. We show how stage theory helps Hick's resurrection theory.

According to John Hick, the resurrection of the person is "the divine creation in another space of an exact psycho-physical 'replica' of the deceased person" (Hick, 1976: 279; hereafter cited as H).¹ A quick sketch of Hick's replication theory might go something like this: God always knows the blueprint of your body at the atomic level. After you die, God takes some atoms – any atoms – and arranges them according to your body's atomic blueprint. This newly assembled body is a *replica* of your earthly body. It is made of the same kinds of atoms arranged in exactly the same way as your earthly body just before its death. God makes this replica on another earthlike planet in another physical space. God immediately heals and rejuvenates your new body (H 294). There is at least one grave difficulty with Hick's replication theory in its original form. We show how new work on the metaphysics of persistence can help to alleviate this difficulty.

We can focus on a single case of resurrection to illustrate the difficulties with Hick's theory and their repair. We refer to a certain earthly body as *Fallen*. We refer to its resurrection replica as *Risen*. So Risen is a replica of Fallen at the last moment of its life. Hick goes to great lengths to try to show that Risen is the same person as Fallen. He interprets this sameness as identity: if Risen is the same person as Fallen, then Risen is *identical* to Fallen. But there are two well known objections.² The first is the Lost Features Objection. The second is the Multiple Replication Objection. We review these objections and then show how new work on the metaphysics of persistence can overcome them.

The *Lost Features Objection* goes like this: (1) For any x and y, if x is identical to y, then x is indiscernible from y. Indiscernibility is sharing all the same features. So for every feature F, x has F if and only if y has F. (2) But clearly Risen and Fallen do not share all the same features. Suppose Fallen died at some ripe old age. Fallen had a 10th birthday party on earth many years ago. But Risen was never on earth and never had a 10th birthday party. van Inwagen gives the example of a manuscript written by St. Augustine. A copy of the manuscript (made after his death) could not have been written by St.

Augustine. It could not have known the impress of his hand (van Inwagen, 1978). Since Risen and Fallen do not share all their features in common, it follows that (3) Risen is not identical to Fallen. Hence Risen is not the same person (or body) as Fallen.

The *Multiple Replication Objection* goes like this: (1) Replication as described by Hick preserves identity. For any x and y , if x is a replica of y (made as Hick says), then x is identical to y . (2) If God can make one copy of Fallen, then God can make many copies. Suppose God makes two copies: Risen-1 and Risen-2. Since replication preserves identity, Fallen is identical to Replica-1 and Fallen is identical to Replica-2. (3) Identity is transitive. For any x , y , and z , if x is identical to y and x is identical to z , then y is identical to z . Therefore (4) Replica-1 is identical to Replica-2. But of course (5) Replica-1 is obviously not identical to Replica-2. They are made of distinct atoms and located at distinct places at the same time. They have different relations and different properties. We thus have a contradiction between (1) and (5). The only problematic premise in this objection is the premise (1) that replication as described by Hick preserves identity. So we must reject this premise. Replication as described by Hick does not preserve identity. Risen is not identical to Fallen. Hence Risen is not the same person (or body) as Fallen. Of course, Hick is aware of this objection (H 290 – 292). He attempts to get around it by saying that God would not make multiple copies of Fallen. But that is not relevant. All that is needed for the objection is the *possibility* of making many copies. This possibility is sufficient to show that replication as described by Hick does not preserve identity.

We can now easily summarize the difficulty with Hick's theory like this: (1) For any x and any y , if x is the same person as y , then x is identical to y . (2) But Risen is not identical to Fallen. Therefore (3) Risen is not the same person as Fallen. But (4) resurrection requires that Risen be the same person as Fallen. Consequently (5) Hick's theory fails to be a resurrection theory. We could, of course, challenge premise (4). It is not entirely clear from the New Testament that resurrection requires that Risen be the same person as Fallen. But since the tradition seems to favor (4), challenging it is probably not wise. The only other option is to try to defeat premise (1). This premise says that diachronic sameness entails identity. This premise is *endurantism*. Hick assumes *endurantism*. But this is a matter of mere historical contingency. No alternatives to *endurantism* were available to Hick at the time of his writings on the resurrection (in the 1960s and 70s). Times have changed. Two well-developed alternatives to *endurantism* are available today. The premise that diachronic sameness entails identity can be denied in two ways. The first way to deny it does not save Hick's theory. The second way to deny it may save Hick's theory.

The first way to deny *endurantism* is known as the *worm theory*. A worm theorist says that a persisting thing is a 4-dimensional (4D) space-time worm with 3D temporal parts (stages or slices). It is like a film composed of frames or a book composed of pages. A body-stage is a 3D part of a 4D body; a person-stage is a 3D part of a 4D person (Lewis, 1976; Hudson, 2001). When we say x is the same person as y , we mean exactly that x is a 3D person-stage, y is a 3D person-stage, and there is some 4D person P such that x is a stage of P and y is a stage of P . So Risen is the same person (body) as Fallen iff there is a

4D person (body) P such that Fallen is an earlier segment of P and Risen is another later segment of P. Can Hick appeal to worm theory? Hudson has argued that worm theory should distinguish between replicas and slices of the same worm (2001: ch. 7). If Hudson is right, then worm theory cannot help Hick. And even if Hudson is wrong, worm theory cannot help Hick. There is no common 4D space-time shared by both the earthly and resurrection universes. They share the same time-line; but they do not share the same space. So they don't share the same space-time. There is no space-time worm that has both Fallen and Risen as segments. So Hick cannot appeal to worm theory.

The second way to deny endurantism is known as the *stage theory* (Sider, 1996, 2001; Hawley, 2001; Varzi, 2003). A stage theorist says that ordinary things (like persons and bodies) are 3D things. They are minimally temporally extended. Minimally temporally extended things link up with one another over time to form temporally ordered and extended processes. Many 3D persons link up over time to form temporally ordered and extended 4D careers. The 3D stages of a 4D process are linked by a *temporal counterpart* relation. For example, Young Socrates is the past temporal counterpart of Old Socrates; Old Socrates is the future temporal counterpart of Young Socrates. Temporal operators like “was” and “will be” act like modal operators. Distinct times are like distinct Lewisian possible worlds (Lewis, 1968, 1986). Just as worlds other than the actual world hold counterparts of things in the actual world, so times other than the present time hold counterparts of things in the present time. We thus obtain the expected truth-conditions for sentences involving temporal operators. For example, “Socrates will be tried” is true at some time iff there is some future time in which Socrates has a future counterpart who is being tried.³ Diachronic sameness is to be analyzed in terms of the temporal counterpart relation: x at earlier time t is the same person as y at later time t* iff x at t is a person; y at t* is a person; and y at t* is a temporal counterpart of x at t. Hick can use stage theory. For although the earthly and resurrection universes do not share the same space, they do share the same time. If stage theory is right, then all Hick requires is that Risen is a temporal counterpart of Fallen.

We can apply the stage theory directly to the resurrection: “I will be resurrected” is true iff there exists a future counterpart of me who is resurrected. Consider Job 19:26-27: “And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes -- I, and not another”. Although this passage may not really be about the resurrection, it doesn't really matter. Presumably anyone who affirms the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting would affirm the same words. Job 19:26-27 is true iff there exists a future counterpart of Job and he sees God with his own eyes. Likewise “I will be identical to a resurrection person” is true now iff there exists a future counterpart of myself that is identical to a resurrection person. So if this stage theoretic interpretation of Hick's replication theory is right, then Fallen can say truly that he (or she) will be resurrected and that he *will be identical* with a resurrection body. Of course, since Fallen is an earthly body now, Fallen cannot truly say that he (or she) *is* identical to a resurrection body. For the resurrection replica, a statement like “I did the bad (good) deed on earth” is truly said iff it has a past counterpart who did the bad (or good) deed. So Risen can truly say “I did the deed on earth” iff Fallen did the deed.

Stage theory solves problems concerning multiple resurrection. One thing can have many temporal counterparts. Suppose God makes two replicas of Fallen. As before, these are Replica-1 and Replica-2. Each replica can truly say “I was Fallen”. And since temporal operators are analyzed in terms of counterparts, the logic of future (and past) tense statements is not like the logic of present tense statements. You cannot truly say “I am rich and I am poor”. But you can truly say “I will be rich and I will be poor”. For any x , “ x will be rich and x will be poor” is true iff x has a future counterpart R who is rich and x has a future counterpart P who is poor. And if time branches (as certain physical theories suggest), then it is possible for x to have both these future counterparts. By analogous reasoning, Fallen can truly say “I will be Replica-1 and I will be Replica-2”. One may or may not want to affirm multiple resurrection. But it poses no metaphysical problem.

One issue remains. If Hick wants to successfully appeal to stage theory, then Hick must offer a defensible analysis of the temporal counterpart relation. Hick’s work suggests an analysis. Hick uses the cybernetic idea that a living body is informed by a biological life-pattern. This pattern is the body-program.⁴ Body-programs can be transmitted like messages. They move along chains of causes that carry information (H 281 – 283). And persons go where body-programs go. We thus obtain the temporal counterpart relation for persons: x at earlier time t is the same person as y at later time t^* iff x at t is a person; y at t^* is a person; and there is chain of causes that carries the same body-program from x at t to y at t^* . The chain does not have to be spatially, temporally, or materially continuous. It does not have to be an immanent causal chain (see Zimmerman, 1997).⁵ The chain of causes merely has to carry information (it has to carry the body-program). So Fallen is the same person as Risen iff there is a chain of causes that carries the same body-program from Fallen to Risen. And according to Hick there is such a chain. So Risen is the same person as Fallen. The only remaining question is whether this analysis of the temporal counterpart relation for persons is defensible. We believe it is. We would defend it like this: (1) Our best scientific analyses of both living and thinking say they are both computational processes. (2) For any feature F , if F is a computational feature of x , then F is transferred by Hick’s temporal counterpart relation. Hence (3) both life and thought follow this relation. And where living and thinking go, there goes a person. Of course, this sketchy defense requires extensive elaboration. But that is a separate task.

Our conclusion looks like this: (1) Stage theory is a defensible alternative to both endurantism and worm theory. (2) For the stage theorist, being the same person over time requires neither identity nor co-membership in the same worm. It requires only the existence of a temporal counterpart relation. (3) the relation Hick defines between the earthly original and its resurrection replica is a temporal counterpart relation. Therefore (4) the resurrection replica is the same person as its earthly original.

Notes

¹The replication theory first appears in Hick (1960). The theory is more extensively developed in Hick (1976: ch. 15).

²Many writers have raised these objections. A representative list includes Clarke (1971), Flew (1976: ch. 8), Quinn (1978), van Inwagen (1978), Loughlin (1985). Dilley (1983) defends Hick against these objections.

³For precision we should draw a distinction between *de re* and *de dicto* uses of temporal operators; but we don't need to get into that level of detail here.

⁴The replication theory is associated with a computational analysis of personhood: the soul is to the body as a program is to a computer (Reichenbach, 1978; Polkinghorne, 1985: 180-181; Mackay, 1997). The soul is the form of the body (see Aristotle, *De Anima*, 412a5-412b21; Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Part 1, Q 78 - 84). Resurrection is the divine installation of the original earthly body-program on a new bio-computer.

⁵Many writers have said that the chain of causes that connects the stages of the same person must be an immanent causal chain. Many recent writers require the earthly and resurrection bodies to be connected by an immanent causal chain (see van Inwagen, 1978; Zimmerman, 1999; Corcoran, 2001; Hudson, 2001: ch. 7). The theories that require an immanent causal chain are carefully criticized by Hershenov (2002, 2003).

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