

DISEMBODIED ANIMALS

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Abstract: In this paper, I defend a hylomorphic version of animalism according to which we survive as immaterial, bodiless animals after death. According to the hylomorphism I am assuming, a soul survives death, and according to the animalism I'm assuming, I am necessarily an animal. One might think this entails that I don't survive death since if I were to survive my death, I would be both an immaterial thing and an animal after death, but necessarily animals are material. I show that the hylomorphic animalist can overcome this problem in a way that respects our intuitions about animals being material. In addition, I defend the hylomorphic animalist who thinks we can survive death from the objection that her view introduces an insoluble mereological puzzle.

1 Hylomorphic Animalism

In this paper, I defend a thesis about the persistence of human persons that is conditional on certain metaphysical assumptions. Those assumptions belong to a view called hylomorphic animalism. According to that view, we are animals and animals are living organisms that result from a form configuring matter. In this section, I'll discuss the details of hylomorphic animalism that are relevant to the debate about whether we survive death.

Animalism is the view that we, human persons, are animals. It is a view that admits of many varieties.¹ Some varieties entail that we are wholly material things; some do not. Some delineate the conditions of our persistence through time; some do not. In this paper, the variety of animalism I will assume implies not only that we are animals, but also that we are necessarily animals. So the variety in question does have implications about the criteria for our identity over time: we last across an interval just in case a particular animal does.² In addition, the variety of animalism I will assume is a hylomorphic one. That is, it implies that animals are body-form compounds—more details to follow. Thus, on the variety of animalism in question, the conditions of our persistence (especially as they relate to our deaths) depend on what a hylomorphist can say about whether (and if so, how) animals persist after death.

¹ See Thornton (2016).

² See, for example, Bailey (2015), Blatti (2014), Olson (1997), Toner (2011), and van Inwagen (1990) for discussions of this variety of animalism.

And what can she say? According to the hylomorphist, the material part of the animal is its body, but “body” can be said in two ways. In one sense, the animal *is* a body. In another sense, the animal *has* a body. The body that the animal *is* is a complex, organized, metabolizing object. It is, for example, the living, breathing thing that is Shamu. It is not in this sense of “body” that an animal has a body; Shamu is not partially a living animal. By the sense of “body” in which Shamu *has* a body, we mean the purely material aspects of Shamu. We mean the stuff that in itself is not living, but which happens to be caught up in the life of the animal. It’s this second sense of “body” according to which an animal has a body. For the hylomorphist, body in the second sense is a component of an animal. Body in the first sense is the compound of body in the second sense and something else.³

The form is the other part of an animal, and it is immaterial. ‘Form’ is defined functionally. It is whatever immaterial thing it is that configures body-in-the-second-sense to be an individual of a certain kind. In the case of an animal, it takes that body in the second sense and makes it a particular living and sentient body-in-the-first-sense, an individual. In the case of a human animal in particular, the form is what makes a body not only a living and sentient individual, but also a rational one. We’ll follow a tradition of usually calling the forms of living things ‘souls’. On the hylomorphism we are considering, it is possible that human souls exist without their wholes for at least some of the time that they exist. (Note that this assumption is compatible with souls needing to be a part of a material whole for some—perhaps the initial—phase of their existence.) In fact, on the hylomorphism we are considering, human souls survive the deaths of the compounds of which they are parts. I will not give an argument in support of the claim that human souls can exist without being a part of a compound.⁴ I will not even argue that the claim makes any more sense than the claim that a knot could continue to exist after the rope it was in is burned to ashes.⁵ Rather, I will assume that it does make sense, following many others who have found it sensible enough to evaluate.⁶

³ Here I follow Toner (2010: 589-591) in distinguishing sense of the term “body”. See also Kenny (1993: 28).

⁴ But some people have given arguments. Aquinas says that it’s because the human soul is the source of a power that can be exercised without the body (*Summa Theologica* I.75.2). In fact, he argues that souls can’t be destroyed (unless they are destroyed by God) because they are metaphysically indivisible (*ST* 1.75.6). So insofar as death is the separation of soul from body and death occurs, the persistence of the soul without the compound of which it once was a part is not only possible, but required.

⁵ This is the claim to which Olson (2007: 174-175) compares the claim that a human being’s form could continue to exist after the human being is burned to ashes.

⁶ Like Brown (2005, 2007), Hershenov and Koch-Hershenov (2006), Hershenov (2008), Toner (2007, 2009a, 2009b, 2010, 2011), Stump (2009), Van Dyke (2014), and many others working within the Thomistic tradition. Brower (2014) does an especially good job of both articulating the difficulty of making sense of the possibility and arguing for its coherence (see especially sections 11.4, 11.5, and 12.5.)

A hylomorphic account of death is that death is the separation of the soul from the body. It's a cessation of the form performing its typical function (though perhaps the form continues to strive to perform that function). Thus, after death there isn't a living, sentient body (that is, a body in the first sense) any more, because that was something that depended for its existence on the soul doing its work.⁷ This is why some take the word "dead" to be an alienans, an adjective that negates the applicability of what it modifies, like "decoy" and "pseudo". Some believe "dead" to be like "decoy" and "pseudo" when modifying "animal" because they think that a dead animal is not really an animal. Animals are things that are alive, and if a soul is what makes non-living body alive, wherever there is not a soul there is not an animal. Thus, on a standard hylomorphic account of death, although the human soul is understood to survive death, the human animal is not. Whether that entails or is compatible with *us*, the persons, surviving death is debatable. It's a debate we are now in a position to survey and contribute to.

2 On whether We Survive Death and an Argument against the Claim that We Do

The opposing parties in the debate on whether we survive death are corruptionists and survivalists. Corruptionists contend that we don't survive our deaths, and survivalists contend that we do. Before getting in to the defenses of these positions, I want to acknowledge that much of the reasoning for and against them comes out in the context of discussing what other hylomorphists have thought about the matter. The hylomorphic view I sketched above roughly belongs, of course, to the Aristotelian and Thomistic traditions, and much of the contemporary conversation about corruptionism and survivalism (from a hylomorphic perspective) has centered on figuring out to which of those camps Aquinas belonged.⁸ I will admit (and if it's not already clear, it will become obvious below) that it is not one of my present goals to stay true to what Aristotle or Aquinas actually held. Nevertheless, the work on figuring out what they believed about death has suggested good reasons for and against the view that we can survive it. It's those reasons that will come into play in this paper, and I won't bother very much here about whether Aquinas or Aristotle actually had those reasons.

The central question in the corruptionism/survivalism debate is whether we, human persons, survive death. The central question is not whether souls survive death. As I mentioned above, there is significant

⁷ I will remain neutral for now on what death means for body in the second sense. A compound's body in the second sense may depend for its existence on being a part of the compound, in which case *both* body in the first sense and body in the second sense go out of existence at death.

⁸ See, for example, Brower (2014), Brown (2005, 2007), Oderberg (2005, 2007, 2012), Stump (2003, 2006), Toner (2007, 2009a, 2009b, 2010), and Van Dyke (2014).

agreement about the compatibility of hylomorphism and the soul's survival. But since, on a hylomorphic view of human persons, we are not souls but instead are animals that are soul-body compounds, the view that souls survive death doesn't entail that *we* do. Nor is the central question in the corruptionism/survivalism debate whether animals survive death. Rather, the central question is whether *we* survive death. But since, given the variety of animalism in question, we are necessarily animals, one of the arguments for the view that we cannot survive our deaths involves a claim about whether animals can survive death. Here is that argument for corruptionism.

Argument for Corruptionism

1. If I can survive death, then possibly, I am immaterial.
2. If possibly I am immaterial, then possibly an animal is immaterial.
3. Necessarily, all animals are material.
4. So, it's not possible that I am immaterial.
5. So I cannot survive death.

The argument is valid, so let's look at the defenses of the premises. (1) follows from the fact that after my death, there seems to be nothing material for me to be.⁹ After my death, there will be a corpse; but on many accounts, a corpse is not a single thing, but rather just a lot of tiny simples arranged in a certain way. Even if my corpse were a single substance, it wouldn't be alive since it would have no soul configuring it into a living thing. And on many accounts, if you can *survive* death, it won't be as a non-living thing, so it won't be as a corpse.¹⁰ It seems, then, that were you to draw up a list of all my parts after death, there would be no material item on the list, and so I would be wholly immaterial. So, if I can survive my death, then possibly I am immaterial.

(2) follows from animalism (at least, it follows from the variety we are assuming). If it's necessary that if I exist I'm an animal (so if wherever and whenever I exist, I'm an animal) and it's possible that I'm immaterial, then it's possible that I am both an animal (I have to be) and that I'm immaterial. So, if it's possible that I'm immaterial, it's possible that an animal is immaterial.

Premise (3) seems obvious. Animals eat and breathe and reproduce and sense, and all of those activities require having a body. If something doesn't

⁹ Assuming also that if there is a resurrection of the body, it's not immediate and that if there's a resurrection of the body, anyone who is resurrected exists between death and the resurrection.

¹⁰ There are dissenters to such accounts, e.g. Feldman (1992: 89-124), whose view is characterized by its rejection of the corruptionist claim. Defenders of such views are obviously a tough crowd for the corruptionist, but she has at least two options: (1) she can concede that the above Argument for Corruptionism might hold sway only for that (sizeable!) portion of her audience that rejects the claim that a corpse can in any meaningful way be said to have "survived" death, (2) she can address the arguments for the view that you can become a corpse. Here is not the place to pursue Option 2, but I will note that Feldman's argument in particular depends on both a materialist view of human persons and a denial of the claim that psychological abilities, activity, or continuity is necessary for our persistence, and that many hylomorphists differ from Feldman on those points.

have a body, it isn't capable of doing those characteristically animalian activities. And such a thing, it seems, can't be an animal when it can't do those things. So, necessarily animals are material.

I think there is something wrong with this defense of (3), and so I think the above argument against survivalism has a weakness. In the next section, I'll call (3) into question.

3 A Reply to the Argument for Corruptionism

Here, I'll deny that necessarily, animals are material by distinguishing between necessarily being material and being normatively material, arguing that something can be normatively material without necessarily being material, and that we only have reason to believe that animals are normatively material.¹¹ If animals aren't material necessarily, then possibly, an animal is immaterial.

Normativity and necessity come apart, in part because they are about different things.¹² If something is normatively a certain way, it is that way when it is working properly. If something is necessarily a certain way, it is that way whenever it exists. Being some way normatively, then, is contrasted with necessarily being some way because while something cannot exist without exemplifying all the ways it is necessarily, something can exist without working properly, and so it can exist without exemplifying all the ways it normatively is. If something is normatively a certain way but not *in fact* that way, it is defective. For example, if an individual (we'll call him Tony; he's a tiger) is normatively four-legged but not in fact four-legged, he is defective. But notice that being a defective tiger does not entail not being a tiger. "Defective", in other words, isn't an alienans. If necessarily tigers are four-legged, on the other hand, then three-legged Tony wouldn't be a tiger, even if he had all the stripes and whiskers and DNA of a tiger.

Here's another illustration. Basketball is normatively a game in which players on teams score points by throwing a ball into a hoop without traveling, fouling, double dribbling, etc. In other words, it is normatively a game in which ten people try to score points while following the rules of basketball.

¹¹ Using normative concepts in debates about personal identity is not without precedent. For example, Gorman (2011) develops and defends a normative notion of personhood. He also briefly suggests that having a body is a normative, but not necessary, condition on being human. Somewhat similarly, Brower (2014) defends what he calls "The Thomistic Conception of Natures" according to which if something is essentially *F*, and *F-ness* is its primary nature, then that thing is *disposed* to be *F*, and can cease to be *F* without ceasing to exist. He uses this conception of natures to argue that human persons can survive their deaths without surviving as human beings (i.e. animals) (see Brower (2014: 297-301)), so Brower, too, considers something like a normative account of personhood. One way in which what I am doing here differs from what Gorman and Brower did is that I am defending a normative account of *animal*, whereas they developed and applied normative accounts of *person*.

¹² The normativity I'm talking about is not a moral sort of normativity, of course. If something fails to be the way it ought to be relative to the sort of norms I'm talking about, it isn't therefore evil. It is therefore imperfect, but amorally so.

Sometimes, however, players break the rules. Sometimes they travel, for instance. But when they travel, they are still playing basketball. Even when they break the rules that specify what's normative for the game, they are still playing basketball, but when they do break such rules, they are playing the game defectively. That is why they get a penalty, which signals defective play. However, when players get a penalty, they are still playing. After all, players don't get penalized if they're not playing. If, necessarily, basketball is a game in which players score points by throwing a ball into a hoop without traveling, then no one could travel while playing basketball. But people do travel while playing basketball.

There are, of course, important differences between basketball games and animals—one of which is that the relevant norms for basketball games are socially constructed (and so possibly changeable), whereas the relevant norms for animals are probably not—and so there are significant limits on the conclusions we can draw about one based on the other. The main work for the basketball example is to illustrate how something can fail to meet the normative requirements on being a certain kind of thing and yet be that kind of thing. *That* is what I think basketball games and animals have in common. I will argue that animals are not material necessarily, but rather are normatively material, in much the way that it is normative but not necessary that basketball players not travel. I will argue, in other words, that animals *can* be immaterial. It's just that when they are, they're defective.

It's difficult to find a principled reason to deny this possibility. After all, animals can survive the loss of many of their body parts. What reason does a hylomorphist have for saying that they can't lose all of them? A materialist (of the variety that excludes the possibility of a disembodied soul) has a principled reason for maintaining that an animal has to be composed of *some* matter in order to exist, but the reason is just that *nothing* exists unless it's made of matter. A hylomorphist, on the other hand, who (on the variety of hylomorphism we are assuming) already grants the possibility of a disembodied soul, does not have that reason.

Granted: it might strike some as incomprehensible that something could lose all of its material parts without ceasing to exist. It is hard to imagine, for example, how one could maintain that a house could survive as an immaterial thing after it had been burned to the ground and its ashes scattered.¹³ But this objection seems tacitly to presuppose either materialism or a variety of hylomorphism that is at odds with the view I am arguing for. In either case, it is assumed that the annihilation of the matter of a thing is tantamount to the annihilation of that thing. But that is a principle in need of defense. My argument is that it is, though perhaps surprising, not at all paradoxical for the variety of hylomorphism in question to have the consequence that a thing could survive the loss of all its material parts. After all, on the variety of hylomorphism in question, not all of the thing's parts are material parts—there is still a soul besides. And so the destruction of all of an

¹³ Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pushing this objection.

animal's material parts might be like the destruction of the shutters and doors of a house, an event that, on many ordinary views, a house can survive. That the disembodied soul is relevantly like a house without its shutters is a substantive and surprising claim. (That's why I attempt a defense of it below.) But the claim is not incomprehensible.

Perhaps it will be insisted that animals necessarily have at least some material part, normatively defined though the concept may be. After all, the variation that normative concepts allow is generally limited by a core of necessity. Even if basketball, for example, is normatively defined, there is a limit on how many (or which) rules can be broken, and if athletes on a court break those rules, whatever they're doing out there is not playing basketball. Likewise, it might be argued, the fact that an animal can lose some of its body does not show that it can lose all of it. There is a limit on the number (and maybe type) of material parts that an animal can lose without ceasing to be an animal.¹⁴

But why should we think *that*? Why should we think that an animal without its body is like a basketball game in which almost everyone violates almost all of the rules? Why should we think that these things that are usually composed of matter and form *must* be so composed? It might be argued that being material or having a body is part of the "core of necessity" of the concept *animal* because animals need bodies to perform their characteristic functions, like sensing and metabolizing, and things need to be performing characteristically animal functions in order to be animals. But the second conjunct isn't right: something can cease having its characteristic features or stop doing its characteristic activities and remain the kind of thing that those features and activities are characteristic of. The fact that animals need bodies to perform their characteristic functions suggests no more than that being material is a normative part of the concept animal, a feature that animals have when they are working well. So even if animals need bodies to perform their characteristic functions, they may not need bodies in order to exist.¹⁵

So it seems to me that convincingly denying the possibility that an animal becomes immaterial is difficult—especially while granting the hylomorphic picture according to which animals have a purely immaterial component that can exist disembodied. I don't know whether the difficulty is due to an absence of good arguments against the possibility, or because arguments for claims about what's necessary require premises about what is necessary and it's difficult to find relevant ones that the opposing parties in this debate agree on, or just because I have a deficient imagination when it comes

¹⁴ Thanks to a number of people for raising this objection, but especially to [redacted], who clearly voiced it in personal correspondence.

¹⁵ There is a slippery-slope sort of objection to my point: if I do not draw the line about what it takes to be an animal at having a material part, where on earth *will* I draw it? I won't answer the objection here because I don't think it's a very good one unless there's a problem in principle with drawing the line elsewhere (which I'm not convinced there is). Moreover, my purpose is here too modest to propose an alternative line location. I will, however, point to another who has tried (specifically from within the Thomistic tradition): Eberl (2009: 197-201).

to arguing for claims about what's necessary that I think are false. I nevertheless think that the burden of proof is on the defender of the weirder claim, and so I will offer a short, but positive, defense of it.

Some have argued that an animal can be pared down to its brain.¹⁶ Their contention is that just as you can cut off an animal's finger or arm without destroying the animal, you can cut off an animal's entire brain-complement—the part of an animal that is the rest of it besides its brain—without destroying the animal. The case of an animal who has lost his brain-complement is, as van Inwagen argues, “logically not much different from the case of the man who has lost an arm: the latter was recently a 150-pound man and has lost about six pounds of bone and blood and tissue; the former was recently a 150-pound man and has lost about 147 pounds of bone and blood and tissue.”¹⁷ On the minimal hylomorphic assumptions that we are granting here—namely, that an animal has a soul, that the soul is what makes the animal alive, and that the soul can exist disembodied—something similar can be said about the case of an animal who lost all but its soul: it is logically not much different from the case of the man who has lost all but his brain.¹⁸

Arguments that confirm that animals can be reduced to their brains (or arguments that are parallel to those arguments) equally well support the claim that animals can be reduced to their souls. For example, Pruss (MS) argues that the most plausible way of rendering how much an animal can survive the loss of is in terms of functional complexity, and that in humans, since the brain controls and coordinates the functioning of many other parts, this measure classifies the brain as the minimal part an organism needs to survive. No measures that classify any other part of the animal as necessary are plausible. For example, a measure that limited the size, weight, or number of organs removable would rule as necessary parts of the body besides the brain, but that measure is not plausible. We can imagine someone suffering from something like elephantiasis such that her affected limbs are a significant percentage of her weight, size, and number of organs (if each cell counts as a kind of functional organ), but even so, it seems that she could survive the loss of those limbs. It is not the *size* of an animal's limbs that are relevant to whether she can survive without them. Another measure, which tracks the importance of organs, also fares poorly. Many organs are equally important, and so it seems unlikely that comparisons between them make sense. For Pruss, the upshot of

¹⁶ In particular, I have in mind van Inwagen (1990) and Pruss (MS), as I will discuss.

¹⁷ van Inwagen (1990: 172-173)

¹⁸ Oderberg (2005: 96-97, 2007) argues for the person's existence after death by a similar analogy, maintaining that after death, we persist as persons in a radically mutilated state. He denies, however, that persons are identical with their souls after death, opting instead for the view that we are constituted by our souls. (As I argue below, I think that's an unnecessary concession.) Though it is clear in the cited passages that Oderberg thinks human persons survive death, he is not explicit about whether animals do or whether, instead, animals are just what persons are constituted by before persons die. In this paper, I appeal to Pruss and van Inwagen to support the claims that it is *animals* that survive death disembodied and that we can be *identical* to them (for the latter claim, see Section 4).

these considerations is that some animals, like human beings, can survive the loss of all of their body parts except for their brains.

It seems that for the hylomorphist of the sort we are discussing, the soul has the functional role that the brain does on the materialist picture: the soul controls and coordinates the functioning of many other parts.¹⁹ In fact, we have defined the soul as something that coordinates non-living material and turns it into something living. And if performing that functional role is the criterion by which we judge whether something is the minimal piece an animal needs for survival, it seems that on the hylomorphic picture, the soul is all an animal needs to survive. In defense of the idea that a functioning but detached brain is a living animal, Pruss notes that, “At least a part of what defines an organism as a living organism of its natural kind is not the actual performance of life functions but something more like a striving for such performance. Think of the fish out of water, which struggles to extract oxygen from its unnatural environment. As long as it is striving, it is alive.” Perhaps the separated soul continues to strive for the performance of life functions and so is like a fish out of water, alive as long as it is striving.²⁰

Similarly to Pruss, van Inwagen (1990) argues that an animal can be “radically maimed” to the extent that all that remains of it is brain-shaped (or made up entirely of the simples that had virtually composed the virtual object that was the animal’s brain). van Inwagen employs a political analogy to illustrate his claim: we are to imagine an empire governed almost entirely from its Imperial Palace. The palace delivers instructions to empire, thereby directing all of the empire’s business, the flow of commodities within its borders, the

¹⁹ Objection: if the soul on the hylomorphic view does the job of the brain on the not-hylomorphic view, we might wonder what work, on the hylomorphic view, there is for the brain to do. If it does what the soul does, then one of the two is redundant, and that seems unlikely. If it doesn’t do what the soul does, then it doesn’t actually play the role that Pruss and van Inwagen (in the next section) say that it does, and that seems problematic since what Pruss and van Inwagen presume about the brain’s behaviors—like that it coordinates certain behaviors in response to certain stimuli—are fairly commonsense. Reply: It’s compatible with hylomorphism that the brain’s activities are (mechanically-speaking) the same as they are on the not-hylomorphic view (this allows her to preserve the commonsense picture of the brain’s behavior), but what those activities accomplish is different (this allows her to leave work for the soul to do). On this sort of view, information processing and response coordinating are insufficient to unify an organism. There must also be a soul. But what does the soul *do* on her view? And why isn’t what the brain does sufficient for organic unification? To the first question: I’m hesitant to commit the hylomorphist to anything beyond what our merely functional definition of the soul permits, but perhaps she can say something like: the soul unifies through the activity of the brain, activity which is related closely enough to actually unifying that we can sometimes felicitously describe it as unifying activity. Just as we see with our eyes but can sometimes say that eyes see, the soul does the unifying with the brain, though we can sometimes say that the brain unifies. To the second question: this question is a specification of a more general question for hylomorphists, namely why do we need forms in our theory at all? The answer to that question, of course, is far outside the scope of this paper.

²⁰ This is an application that Pruss saw but did not develop: “It is worth noting that the control-based and Aristotelian arguments might allow an animal that has a soul as a part of it to survive as just the soul.”

local administration of the courts and police, etc. We are then to imagine a catastrophe isolating the palace so that no information about the empire can get in, and no information or instructions for the empire to follow can get out. The empire, consequently, falls apart. As soon as the flow of coordinating information from the palace stops, the empire shrinks to comprise the isolated palace staff, “not quite” ceasing to exist (pp. 174-175). van Inwagen argues that a severed brain—kept alive by some elaborate machine, perhaps—is like the isolated palace. Just as the catastrophe that struck the empire reduced the empire to the size of its palace, so too would separating the brain from the rest of the body reduce the organism to the size of its brain.

On the hylomorphic view we are considering, it seems that the soul has a role very much like the role of the Imperial Palace or the brain on van Inwagen’s picture. The soul is, by its functional definition, the thing responsible for making some matter the matter of a particular living organism, and it coordinates and unifies all of what would otherwise not be a part of an organism or caught up in the life of that organism. Provided, then, that the soul can exist in the absence of the soul-complement (which is what we’ll call the virtual part of a human being that is the rest of him besides his soul), it seems that the animal can be reduced to its soul no less than an empire of the centralized sort described above can be reduced to its imperial palace or an animal to its brain.

4 The Afterlife Puzzle

Nevertheless, this picture of the afterlife presents a puzzle. Prior to the soul’s separation from the body, both the soul and the animal exist, but because the animal has parts the soul doesn’t have, the soul and the animal are distinct from one another. After the soul’s separation, however, if the animal continues to exist—which is what I’m suggesting—the soul and the animal seem not to be distinct. In fact, if the animal survives death, it seems that the animal becomes the soul. But if the animal were to become the soul, then two distinct objects would become the same object, and that is impossible. Something has to give. Is it that the animal can survive death?

Not necessarily. The general concern about distinct things, one of which is a part of the other, becoming the same thing is not without precedent, and there are a variety of ways to mitigate the concern. The above puzzle about the afterlife is a version of the familiar body-minus puzzle of material constitution. To illustrate the problem, consider a well-formed and properly functioning cat named Tibbles, and consider the large part of Tibbles that includes all of her except her tail. We will call that large part of Tibbles that excludes her tail ‘Tib’. Tibbles and Tib are not identical; Tibbles has a tail but Tib does not. But suppose that at some point, an accident occurs and Tibbles’ tail is annihilated. After the accident, it seems that Tibbles and Tib are

identical. But if Tibbles and Tib are identical, then two distinct objects become the same object, and that is impossible. We have a problem.²¹

This problem generalizes to create a puzzle about anything that can lose a part. For anything that can lose a part, that thing, 'Body', has a large proper part, 'Body-minus'. Body and Body-minus are not identical; Body has a part that Body-minus does not. However, when Body loses a part, Body—distinct from Body-minus—seems to become identical to Body-minus. Thus the puzzle.

There are a variety of resolutions to this puzzle, and because the puzzle about the afterlife is a version of the body-minus puzzle, its resolutions model answers to the afterlife puzzle. Looking more closely at the body-minus puzzle and how one can reply to it, then, is helpful in identifying available replies to the afterlife puzzle.²²

As Rea (1997) formulates the body-minus puzzle, the puzzle arises from the following five, mutually inconsistent claims:

(The Identity Assumption) If Body and Body-minus share all of the same parts at the same time, then Body is identical with Body-minus.

(The Necessity Assumption) If Body is identical with Body-minus, it is necessary that Body is identical with Body-minus.

(The Existence Assumption) Body and Body-minus exist.

(The Essentialist Assumption) The parts of Body compose something such that, necessarily, its parts are arranged Body-wise.

(The Principle of Alternative Compositional Possibilities) The parts of Body compose something such that, possibly, its parts are not arranged Body-wise.

Denials of different claims amount to different solutions to the puzzle. For example, denying the Identity Assumption, as Wiggins (1968) does, relieves the pressure to say that Body and Body-minus are ever identical. As long as the Identity Assumption is false, when Body and Body-minus share all of their parts, one of them can constitute the other without being identical with it.²³ Denying the Necessity Assumption, as Myro (1985) does, makes room for the possibility that two things are identical only temporarily. Denying the existence assumption, as van Inwagen (1980, 1981, 1990) and Unger (1980) do, takes either Body or Body-minus out of the picture, so that there aren't two things for there to be a problematic relation between. Denying a three-dimensionalist metaphysic is another option. Given the doctrine of temporal parts (and modifying the above assumptions accordingly), the body-minus puzzle does not get off the ground, even if all five modified assumptions are

²¹ This puzzle, based on a similar Stoic puzzle, was introduced into contemporary discussion by Geach (1962) and Wiggins (1967) and discussed in detail by Rea (1995, 1997).

²² Thanks to Mike Rea for pointing this out to me.

²³ This view has many defenders. Among them are Doepke (1982), Baker (1997, 1998), Koslicki (2004), and Rea (1998).

true. This is because if things have temporal parts, then Body has temporal parts that Body-minus doesn't have. It has, for example, the temporal part that fills up the region of space-time that it occupies up to the annihilation of its tail. If Body has parts that Body-minus doesn't have, then the Identity Assumption—even when modified to suit a four-dimensionalist metaphysic—doesn't tell us that Body and Body-minus are identical. Besides these, there are many other possible ways to resolve the above puzzle, but I will not continue the survey here.²⁴

To turn the body-minus puzzle into the afterlife puzzle, substitute 'Soul' for 'Body-minus' and 'Animal' for 'Body' in each of the above assumptions. Denials of the different adjusted claims (or the adoption of the doctrine of temporal parts) amount to different solutions to the puzzle. The question at hand is this: which (if any) of these solutions are available to the defender of disembodied animals as described in this paper? Available solutions are those consistent with the following: (1) basic hylomorphism (as described in Section 1); (2) animalism (as described in Section 1); and (3) the thesis that an animal can exist without its body.²⁵ If there are no available solutions, hylomorphic animalist survivalism succumbs to afterlife problems; disembodied animals are things we can never become. If, however, there is an available solution, there is nothing mereological in our way.

It's clear that some solutions are unavailable. The hylomorphist could not adopt physicalist solutions, for example. She could not adopt Unger's (1980) eliminativist solution, according to which there are no compounds. On the additional assumption that compounds can survive the loss of some of their parts, she could not adopt Chisholm's (1973, 1976) mereological essentialist solution, either.

Nevertheless, several replies are promising. For example, the defender of disembodied animals could reject the identity assumption. This is the solution that Stump (2006) proposes.²⁶ According to Stump, we are animals—and necessarily so—but we survive death without matter. Although Stump thinks that at death Socrates has no matter but is yet an animal, she denies that that animal is identical to the immaterial soul. Rather, Stump argues that after death, the animal is wholly *constituted* by its immaterial soul. Stump characterizes the constitution relation as the relation that holds between a whole and its parts when the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.²⁷ According to Stump's constitution view, throughout the existence of an animal, the animal is at least partly constituted by her soul, but at some times when it exists, the

²⁴ See Rea (1997) and Wasserman (2015) for analyses of other solutions.

²⁵ In addition, in order to effectively model her solutions to the afterlife puzzle after solutions to the body-minus puzzle, the hylomorphist has to understand the soul as a part alongside the more familiar material parts. Fine (1999) and Koslicki (2008) defend such accounts. Johnston (1992, 2006) does not.

²⁶ She proposes this solution in the context of interpreting Aquinas, and she is not alone in reading Aquinas as denying the identity assumption (see, for example, Brown (2005), Brower (2014)).

²⁷ For further discussion of this relation, see Baker (1999).

animal is also constituted by matter. At death, the matter ceases to constitute the animal, and the soul becomes the only constitutor. When that happens, the animal continues to exist since, according to Stump, the soul is sufficient for the continued existence of the animal. Nevertheless, the two are not identical; rather, the soul constitutes the animal.

That is one promising way to resolve the afterlife puzzle, but it is not the only one, and there may be better ones on offer. Besides inheriting the general worries about constitution as distinct from identity, the view arguably introduces new worries special to the afterlife case.²⁸ In addition, it falls short of making the bold claim I think the defender of disembodied animals is justified in maintaining: i.e. that an animal can be identical to an immaterial thing. To support the claim that an animal can become identical to a soul, one could deny the Existence Assumption (for the soul prior to death) rather than the Identity Assumption. In what follows, I'll show how the hylomorphist can do that, modeling her denial after van Inwagen's denial of the same assumption, and I will leave it up to the reader to develop and defend other ways of solving the puzzle, whether via different ways of denying the Existence Assumption or via denying different assumptions altogether.

It's worth briefly noting that if the hylomorphist can coherently deny the Existence Assumption, then there is a survivalist view that avoids violating both the weak supplementation principle (roughly: that if something has a proper part, it has at least one other proper part) and the necessity of identity—*pace* corruptionists who accuse survivalists of facing that dilemma (for example, Toner (2009a)) and survivalists who accept the first horn of it (for example, Oderberg (2012) and Hershenov and Koch-Hershenov (2006)).

When van Inwagen denies the Existence Assumption, he denies that Body-minus exists. Roughly, here's his case for doing so: consider again both Tibbles and the proper part of Tibbles that is all of him besides his tail, Tib. If both Tibbles and Tib exist, they are not identical (since one has a tail and one doesn't) but can *become* identical (since Tibbles can survive the loss of his tail). It's impossible for different things to become the same thing, so, given that Tibbles exists, either Tibbles can't lose his tail or Tib doesn't exist before the amputation. The latter disjunct is clearly preferable.

Similarly, the hylomorphist could deny that the soul—the afterlife puzzle's counterpart to Tib and Body-minus—exists. Just as after the accident Tibbles is the creature without a tail (which technically did not exist prior to the accident), after death, the animal is the creature without a body (i.e. the soul, which technically did not exist prior to death). On this solution to the afterlife puzzle, it's possible for an animal to be identical to a material and non-defective (in the relevant way at least) thing now but identical to an immaterial and defective thing after her death.²⁹

²⁸ See Toner (2009a) and Williams (2005).

²⁹ In light of other commitments van Inwagen has, he must make the following concessions: that Tibbles' tail is not an organism and that Tib in the proper environment will maintain itself but the tail will not. He makes similar concessions explicit in discussing the possibility of an

Denying the Existence Assumption might seem to be a problematic solution to the afterlife puzzle. That solution implies that the soul didn't exist before death, and hylomorphism implies that animals have a body and soul. Whether the solution is properly hylomorphic is thus questionable. But van Inwagen's view faces a similar objection, and he has a reply. His argument implies not only that Tib never existed but also that Tibbles' tail never existed. (This follows from the premise that if Tibbles' tail existed, Tib existed. It would be arbitrary to accept the existence of the tail but deny the existence of Tib.) The claim that Tibbles' tail never existed seems about as patently false as claims can be.

van Inwagen's reply: just as the proposition expressed by the sentence 'the sun does not move' does not imply the falsity of propositions like *The sun moved behind the elms*, the proposition expressed when he says 'there was never any such thing as Tibbles' tail' does not imply the falsity of propositions like *Tibbles groomed his tail*. To defend this reply, van Inwagen has to show that sentences that involve reference to or quantification over the limbs of animals can be paraphrased into sentences that clearly do not involve such reference or quantification, which he does. For example, he paraphrases 'some chairs are heavier than some tables' thus: 'there are simples that are arranged chairwise and there are simples that are arranged tablewise, and the simples arranged chairwise are heavier than the simples arranged tablewise.'³⁰ Similarly, he could paraphrase 'Tibbles groomed his tail' like this: 'there are simples that are arranged Tibbles'-tailwise, and Tibbles groomed them'. The hylomorphist, too, could pursue such a defense, showing how sentences that involve reference to or quantification over souls (like 'this animal is composed of a body and a soul') can be paraphrased into sentences that do not involve such reference or quantification.

One option for the hylomorphist closely parallels van Inwagen's account. She could quantify over immaterial simples so that sentences that reference the animal's soul are paraphrased into sentences that instead quantify over (immaterial) simples arranged soul-wise. That view would of course be unpopular, but it would not be unhylomorphic.³¹ There are more options. For

animal shrinking to its brain. He argues that the severed brain-complement is not an organism (1990: 177) and that while a severed head will maintain itself in the proper environment, a headless body will not be able to do so without a life-support system that involves the functional equivalent of a computer (1990: 178). This difference is what makes it so that the simples composing a separated brain constitute a life while the simples (virtually) composing a separated brain-complement do not. If the hylomorphist has to make parallel concessions (viz. that the soul is a virtual object; that the severed soul-complement is not an organism; that a severed soul in the proper environment will maintain itself, but a soulless body will not be able to do so without a life-support system that involves the functional equivalent of a computer; that this difference is what makes it so that the separated soul constitutes a life while the soul-complement does not), I do not think she should see them as particularly costly.

³⁰ See van Inwagen (1990: Section 11).

³¹ And perhaps there is an argument for it: the best answer to the question "which objects exist?" is an eliminativist answer like van Inwagen's: simples and the organisms that some simples compose. But if non-simples cannot be reduced to the simples that compose them (see

example, “this animal is composed of matter and soul” could be paraphrased as “both physical stuff and immaterial stuff compose this animal” or “this animal has both a physical aspect and a soulish aspect”. Exactly what paraphrase is most compelling will depend on various prior assumptions (about, for example, what exists and under what conditions multiple things come to form a single compound), and so I will not argue for one particular paraphrase here. The point is that the hylomorphist eliminativist needs some paraphrase or other, but that such a requirement and the fulfillment of it is not without precedent.

The need for such paraphrasing should not disqualify a hylomorphist’s view from being hylomorphic any more than the need for paraphrasing about brains within van Inwagen’s account should disqualify it from being view that can make sense of the claim that unlike most animals, jellyfish lack brains. On van Inwagen’s view, of course, *all* animals lack brains, jellyfish or not. But that does not preclude the defender of his view from distinguishing between jellyfish and other animals according to standard phylogenetic rules, which classify jellyfish as uniquely in the “animal-that-lacks-a-brain” family. This is because van Inwagen’s eliminativism is not a revelation about biology; it doesn’t suggest anything like that mammals are neurologically more similar to jellyfish than previously thought. If van Inwagen is right, mammals and jellyfish are no less distinguishable than they are if he’s wrong. Similarly, if the hylomorphist who denies the existence assumption is right, it is not thereby especially difficult to distinguish between the hylomorphic animal and something without a form. If there can be something neurologically distinctive about non-jellyfish on van Inwagen’s view, there can be something formally distinctive about hylomorphic animals on the view in question. The point is this: suppose we grant (as we would if van Inwagen is right about brains) that it is not in principle incoherent to deny the existence of brains and yet meaningfully maintain that unlike jellyfish, most animals have brains. On that supposition, it seems likewise not in principle incoherent to deny that the soul exists prior to death and yet meaningfully maintain that unlike animals on a physicalist picture (or rocks given a species of hylomorphism on which only organisms have forms), hylomorphic animals are made up of bodies and souls.

Some may find the above responses less than ideal. Good news: you may not need them. Perhaps you could deny an assumption other than the Identity or Existence Assumptions, or deny them in ways that differ from van Inwagen’s and Stump’s. I leave it to the reader to explore these solutions further and select the one that fits best with her more central metaphysical assumptions. In order to avoid burying my main thesis in the details of a tangential debate, I will not pursue the other possibilities here.³² I will,

Olson (2006) “Paradox of Increase”), then if we can be reduced to our souls, our souls are not simple.

³² I will highlight, however, the independence of solution selection from views about whether humans are special among the animals with respect to post-mortem survival. Nothing in my approach to solving the afterlife puzzle has ruled out its application to animals in general rather

however, flag the project of exploring alternatives as a worthwhile pursuit. The exploration stands to focus widespread disagreement about death in the hylomorphic literature. My sense is that the parties to the disagreement have a sense for what some of the principles at stake are—for example, there’s significant back-and-forth about survivalism’s violation of the necessity of identity or the weak supplementation principle—but haven’t systematically considered all of the alternatives to violating them. My point for now is that there is at least one pretty good solution to the afterlife puzzle that allows there to be disembodied animals in a really robust way: animals which are not only closely associated with disembodied things, but identical with them.

5 Conclusion

Neither animalism nor hylomorphism entail that necessarily animals are material or that animals are necessarily material. If anything, it seems that animals are normatively material, but something can be both normatively material and actually immaterial. It’s just that when it is immaterial, it is a defective instance of whatever kind it belongs to. There should be nothing terribly alarming here. Souls, we granted, play a certain functional role and can exist independently of matter. On those assumptions, it is no weirder to say than animals can be severed souls that that they can be severed brains.³³

It thus seems that the hylomorphist has available a line of reply to objections to the effect that we cannot survive our deaths because we are animals. She only has to admit that there can be immaterial animals and that we can be them, and as I hope to have shown in this paper, those are not unreasonable admissions.³⁴

than to human animals exclusively. But that is because the scope of things to which afterlife-puzzle solutions can be applied (i.e. things the souls of which can survive disembodiment) will vary according to the species of hylomorphism presumed, and the current discussion is neutral between species of hylomorphism that vary along that dimension.

³³ I have focused the preceding discussion on defending hylomorphic animalism, but a similar defense could be made for alternative accounts of personal identity. For example, a defender of the view that human persons are brains could reply to the survivalist’s objection by arguing that brains are not necessarily material. She could tell, *mutatis mutandis*, the story I tell about how hylomorphic compounds become immaterial. Additionally, perhaps a defense of the possibility of disembodied animals is available even to the proponents of *non*-hylomorphic accounts of personal identity. For example, if there are immaterial things that are not souls in the hylomorphic sense, perhaps the possibility of animals becoming those things is also defensible. Exactly how alternative accounts of personal identity fare in reply to the survivalist objection is outside of my present jurisdiction; nothing I have argued here implies that hylomorphic animalism has an edge relative to alternative accounts (hylomorphic or otherwise). Rather, what I have argued is that if, more things considered, hylomorphic animalism fails to have an edge, it is not because it entails corruptionism.

³⁴ I am grateful to [redacted] for helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

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