

Divided Minds and Divine Judgement: Dissociative Identity Disorder, Heaven and Hell, and the Resurrection of the Body

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Abstract: In this paper, I shall argue that Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID), a disorder in which seemingly independent identities (alters) arise within the same individual, can have considerable consequences in Christian theology. I shall focus on traditional Christian understandings of the afterlife. I shall begin by outlining DID, and shall argue that in some DID cases, alters appear to be different persons according to some definitions of personhood in Christian theology. I shall then illustrate the difficulty this raises for two influential ideas in the Christian tradition: the heaven and hell understanding of the afterlife, and the idea of the resurrection of the body. Finally, I shall consider some objections to the problem, and shall highlight which responses are the most plausible.

Keywords: Dissociative Identity Disorder, Personhood, Heaven and Hell, Bodily Resurrection

Introduction

Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID) is a psychiatric condition in which multiple identities arise within the same body.¹ It is a disorder that prompts profound metaphysical and ethical questions, as one can ask whether these different identities can be considered different persons, and if they can, how society should navigate the inevitable complications that this causes.

I shall argue that these discussions also have significant consequences for Christian theology, and shall illustrate this through the problems it raises for influential beliefs about the afterlife. This shall be a project in analytic science-engaged theology, as I shall pay close attention to the empirical literature on DID whilst using it to discuss complex problems that are constructed and assessed using the methods applied in analytic theology.

¹ The title of this paper is influenced by Radden (1996), which remains one of the most comprehensive and influential philosophical treatments of DID.

For many thinkers in the Christian tradition, life after death comes with the possession of bodies, and it is sometimes affirmed that these bodies are actually the same bodies that we possessed prior to death.² There is one key difference: our post-resurrection bodies are glorified.³ We can label the idea that humans are resurrected with the same bodies they had prior to death the same body thesis.

The same body thesis is inspired by the resurrection of Christ. There are indications in the Bible that the body Christ possessed after his resurrection is the same body he had before he died. The obvious passage one can refer to in support of this is John 20:27, in which Christ, whilst referring to the wounds he endured during his crucifixion, says to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.'⁴ Passages like this lend support to the same body thesis and, whilst it is not universally accepted by theologians, it is certainly popular enough to warrant discussion.

A well-known understanding of the afterlife in Christianity is one in which those with faith in Christ ascend to heaven to a life of eternal bliss with God, and those without faith are consigned to the fires of hell, to experience a life of eternal torture and misery.⁵ Faith is necessary and sufficient for salvation. With it, one can enter heaven, and without it, one cannot. This view, like the same body thesis, has proven influential in the Christian tradition. Many will thus have an understanding of the afterlife that includes both the doctrines of heaven and hell and the same body thesis. In such a view, individuals would be sent to either heaven or hell and would have the same bodies they had before death. Such an understanding is illustrated in Dante's *Inferno*, when Virgil states of the residents of hell that 'each will see again his sad tomb, will take again his flesh and his shape, will hear what resounds eternally.'⁶

In this paper, I am going to argue that DID can prompt a difficult challenge for a heaven and hell view incorporating the same body thesis. I shall start by outlining the main features of DID, and shall then argue that it is not obvious that the alters in DID sufferers are all the same person. I shall not state that alters are definitely different persons, but shall argue for the more nuanced claim that in some cases of DID, it appears that the alters are different persons according to certain definitions of personhood in Christian theology.

² There is a vast amount of theological and exegetical support for this claim. For an outline of this, see Mugg and Turner (2017). It has been argued that this view is difficult to reconcile with the popular Christian thesis of the intermediate state because the latter makes the resurrection of the body superfluous. For a discussion of this, see Turner (2014).

³ Merricks (2009), 476. See Davis (1997), for more on this.

⁴ John 20:27 (New International Version).

⁵ See Walls (2010), for an overview of the contemporary debate on heaven and hell.

⁶ Canto 6: 97–99. The translation used is Durling (1996). For an outline of how the love of God can still be seen in the suffering inflicted in Dante's hell, see Stump (1986).

I shall then outline the problem this poses for the conjunction of the heaven and hell view with the same body thesis. I shall argue that if alters in DID patients can be considered different persons and must continue to share the same body after death, it is possible for an alter with faith to be consigned to hell or an alter without faith granted access to heaven due to the faith, or lack thereof, of another alter. In using personhood as the appropriate category when discussing the afterlife, I am following other key scholars in the philosophical literature.⁷

After this, I shall consider some potential responses, and shall conclude that one plausible way of avoiding the problem is by conditionalizing the same body thesis and claiming that those that go to heaven are resurrected with bodies, and those sent to hell are not. Alternatively, I shall argue that one can widen one's understanding of 'same body' so that it refers to people's bodies throughout their lives, such that different bodies can be formed for each alter after death from matter that constituted their shared body at some point in their lives prior to death, so that it can still be considered the same body.

1. Dissociative Identity Disorder and Personhood

In this section, I shall assess whether the different alters in DID sufferers can be considered the same person or different persons here in relation to some definitions of personhood in Christian theology. The survey of definitions of personhood shall not be exhaustive, but the sample considered is sufficient to illustrate the problems DID can cause.

Dissociative Identity Disorder

The DSM-5 provides two primary criteria for the diagnosis of DID: Firstly, we have 'disruption of identity characterized by two or more distinct personality states', and secondly 'recurrent gaps in the recall of everyday events, important personal information, and for traumatic events that are inconsistent with ordinary forgetting.'⁸ Dissociation itself means that the mental processes that are usually attached in an individual become detached. In DID, there is a discontinuity in memory that results in problems with self-integration and thus

⁷ See, for example, Adams (1993), Buckareff and Plug (2005), Sider (2002), and Baker (2003).

⁸ Quoted in Morton (2017), 315. Some have characterised DID as an associative disorder rather than a dissociative one as they see it as a failure to associate certain self-relevant information and not a process of splitting. This is justified by the fact that in many cases DID develops in childhood, where there is far less to split or dissociate than there is in adults because children are developing. See Oppenheimer (2002). I do not think that this impacts the arguments made in this paper, as my focus is on the differences between alters and not on their emergence.

causes the existence of multiple, at least partially independent identities (alters)⁹ within the same individual that take control of consciousness alternatively.¹⁰

For the purposes of this paper, I shall not investigate the causes of this condition, but shall instead assess whether alters can be considered different persons. There are two competing positions in the philosophical literature on DID. Firstly, we have the Multiple Persons thesis, the idea that the alters in DID sufferers are different persons. Proponents of this thesis point to the apparent differences in character, will, and so on of alters to argue that they are different persons, and are thus distinct, morally autonomous agents. Secondly, we have the Single Person thesis, the idea that DID sufferers are individual human persons whose psychiatric symptoms are similar to global self-delusion, and the different personalities are merely altered states of these persons and are not metaphysically distinct from them.¹¹

The Multiple Persons thesis is the more controversial of the two, but it is not without justification. It is motivated by the independence that alters seem to have. Each alter appears able to have control of the body, they have very different personalities, and often lack awareness of other alters due to memory gaps.¹²

The Christian theologian may wish to reject the Multiple Persons thesis outright to avoid any difficulties it might raise. After all, the Single Person thesis is certainly the simpler and more intuitive option. Given this, if one is of the opinion that the differences between alters that shall be discussed in the forthcoming section can be explained from within an understanding in which they are the same person, the Single Person thesis will be more appealing. I recognise this, but shall argue here that if the Multiple Persons thesis is true, it can prompt some interesting problems for certain views in Christian theology.

Although I note the challenges that come with arguing for the Multiple Persons thesis, I shall provide some motivation for it in this paper using two definitions of personhood popular amongst prominent Christian philosophers, namely the Different Centres definition and the I-thou definition.¹³ To reiterate, I shall not argue for the claim that the alters in DID sufferers are distinct persons, but that in some cases of DID the alters seem to be different persons according to the definitions considered here. I also shall not consider whether the definitions

⁹ Güell et al (2017), 109.

¹⁰ Morton (2017), 315.

¹¹ Kennett and Matthews (2002), 510–511. Kennett and Matthews argue for the Single Person thesis.

¹² Matthews (2003), 144.

¹³ There are scholars who endorse the Single Person thesis. Michelle Maiese, for example, has argued that alter formation is caused by extreme emotional ambivalence. The subject uses alters to cope with pervasive inner conflict and also hides this inner conflict from herself. See Maiese (2016). For an animalist view that deems DID the result of a failure to integrate alternative autobiographical memory schemata, see Brown (2001).

themselves are plausible, but their presence in the theological literature should be enough to show that the conclusions drawn are of concern.¹⁴

Before further digression, it is important for one to note that despite the philosophical nature of this discussion, there is an ethical, or even pastoral dimension to these issues that must be acknowledged. DID is a psychiatric disorder after all, and has a serious impact on the lives of its sufferers. Furthermore, it is thought that there are cases where dissociation is caused by trauma, such as abuse at the hands of caregivers.¹⁵ It is important that those with this condition are accounted for in Christian soteriology. The topic discussed here helps us to understand whether, and how, DID patients can be incorporated into accounts of salvation, and is thus of extreme importance.

The Different Centres Definition

I will start by considering the Different Centres definition. Here, persons are defined as distinct centres of knowledge, love, will and action.¹⁶ According to this definition, alters would be the same person if they could not be considered distinct centres with these features, and different persons if they are distinct in this regard. I shall consider each criterion one by one.

Let us start with the knowledge criterion. The inclusion of memory gaps in the definition of DID immediately suggests that alters are distinct centres of knowledge.¹⁷ However, there are studies that seem to oppose this conclusion in the psychiatric literature on DID. The idea that there is compartmentalisation, or the isolation of material within individual alters, is now being questioned.¹⁸

For instance, Huntjens et al. have found evidence challenging the hypothesis of inter-identity amnesia, the idea that the memories one alter has are not transferable over to another. They asked some alters in DID sufferers to learn a list of words (list A), and, after the patients had switched to another alter claiming no knowledge of the first list, they were asked to learn a different set of words

¹⁴ For an assessment of different criteria for personal identity in light of DID, see section 6 of Sinnott-Armstrong and Behnke (2000). See Rovane (1998), 169–179, for a consideration of the personhood of alters in light of the account of personal identity she develops in the book. Rovane expresses sympathy for the Multiple Persons thesis, as does Bayne (2002).

¹⁵ The role abuse plays in the causing of DID is disputed. See Maiese (2017), 767–768. See the case of Sarah outlined in Rothschild (2009), for a case of DID in which abuse seems to play a key role in causing the condition.

¹⁶ See Swinburne (2018), 425–426, and Hasker (2013), 19–25.

¹⁷ To be clear, dissociation between alters often appears partial. Although autobiographical memory (memory of one's own personal experiences or life story) is disjointed, semantic memory (memory of factual information about the world) often remains intact (Maiese (2017), 766). For the sake of simplicity, I shall refer generally to memory here.

¹⁸ Dorahy et al (2014), 410–411.

(list B). A week later the alters that learnt list B underwent a surprise recognition test in which they were shown the words from both lists A and B with some new, distractor words, and were asked which words were old and which were new. Participants recognised words from list A considerably more often than they recognised the distractor words, which should not be the case if there is strong amnesia between the alters. This implies that memories can be transferred from one alter to another.¹⁹

This study suggests that memory functioning remains intact between alters, despite patients reporting inter-identity amnesia.²⁰ If accurate, the transfer of memories that can occur between alters implies that the distinct alters in DID sufferers are not distinct centres of knowledge, which in turn suggests that they are not different persons according to the Different Centres definition.

However, the evidence for this is by no means conclusive. John Morton performed an experiment similar to Huntjens et al. and found that in pairs of alters in different patients, in some there was no interference from the material learnt by the other alter.²¹ In a particular subject, JO, who had four alters, Morton found that all four alters, when tested, were able to discriminate between the two lists.²² When remarking on these findings in one pair of the alters, Morton said: 'It should be noted that this result came as a great surprise. I had no reason to suppose that the Huntjens et al. result would not generalise.'²³

What is the significance of this for our discussion? If there are such patients in which information is not transferred between alters one cannot deem the results obtained by the likes of Huntjens et al. generalisable, and thus it does not conclusively show that alters are not distinct centres of knowledge.

It might be a little risky to rely solely on this argument, however. It would require the epistemic boundaries between alters remaining fixed, and epistemic changes in the relationships between alters can occur with successful therapeutic intervention. This would have the undesirable consequence of alters' status as persons constantly changing, as they would shift from separate persons to the same person as the epistemic relationships between them change.²⁴

Furthermore, in cases of DID, awareness of other alters is often found to be asymmetrical, as there can be one alter that is aware of the thoughts and actions of another whilst the latter does not even know that the former exists.²⁵ This raises additional complications. In cases in which one alter knows the thoughts and

¹⁹ Huntjens et al (2003). Similar studies are discussed in Huntjens et al (2012).

²⁰ Huntjens et al (2012), 2.

²¹ Morton (2017), 315.

²² Morton (2017), 320–321.

²³ Morton (2017), 320–321.

²⁴ Radden (1996), 52–53.

²⁵ Braude (1995), 43.

actions of another but the latter knows nothing of the former alter, how would they be classified? It is unclear how to decide whether to deem them different persons or the same person, as the knowledge is shared according to one alter and it is not according to another.

One can avoid these complications, however, as there is still reason to think that alters can be distinct centres of knowledge, even when the boundaries are less pronounced or asymmetrical. There are cases in which alters initially report ignorance about the memories and experiences of other alters, and that the boundaries causing this have been dispelled through therapies like hypnosis. Even after the memories and experiences of the other have been acquired, the alter's awareness of these is said to be limited, alienated, and without a sense of ownership.²⁶

The fact that these boundaries can be dispelled does not render the idea that such alters are different centres of knowledge implausible, as even when they acquire knowledge of another's memories and experiences they are limited and lack the sense of ownership that would be felt by the alter they acquired them from. Alters can have phenomenological access to the thoughts and experiences of other alters without regarding those thoughts and experiences as their own.²⁷ There is thus good reason to consider alters different centres of knowledge in such cases.

Let us now turn to the action criterion. There are considerations that point in favour of the Multiple Persons thesis. One is the classification of alter personalities into different functions. For example, one has child personalities that protect the subject from pain and trauma; persecutor personalities who torment the other alters; helper personalities who give advice and guidance, and assist with tasks that others find difficult; and recorder personalities, who preserve the continuous awareness of the individual despite the amnesia between alters.²⁸ This implies that in some cases, alters are generated to deal with specific situations and vary accordingly.

Furthermore, it has been suggested that in cases of DID no alter is truly 'primary' in any deep sense. It is thought that when alters are created to deal with specific forms of trauma, the traits and abilities of the person that existed prior to dissociation get distributed to the different alters that have arisen. As the number of alters grows, they become increasingly specialised such that no individual alter displays the complexity and range of functions possessed by the person prior to dissociation.²⁹ This again suggests that abilities and traits can differ significantly between alters.

²⁶ Radden (1996), 48–49.

²⁷ See Rovane (1998), 171–172, for an outline of this and a case study.

²⁸ Braude (1995), 40. Ozturk and Sar (2016) also discuss the functions played by different alters.

²⁹ Braude (1995), 56–57.

Even with this in mind, one might still argue for the Single Person thesis. The capacities, traits, and skills of the different alters often overlap, even when the alters have particular functions. When an alter performs its function and deals with a particular social situation, for example, the abilities they draw on are often ones that are available to other alters. Furthermore, the variation in abilities between alters is limited because they share the same brain and body.³⁰ This implies that they are not distinct centres of action, as the abilities they draw on when doing something are similar and stem from the same source.

On the contrary, there is evidence that suggests that this argument does not apply to all DID cases. In some instances, alters can have abilities or sensory capacities not found in other alters, showing that these do not always overlap. One alter could be good at mathematics or foreign languages whilst others are not. Moreover, some alters may have a total or partial reduction in the use of certain senses as a result of traumas experienced. For example, a blind personality may be produced to deal with experiences of being locked in dark places as a child.³¹

There can also be physiological differences between alters, such as variations in handedness and voice quality, different sight conditions such as the need for glasses or colour-blindness, differences in tolerance of drugs and even in allergic responses.³² One would expect alters' sharing of the same brain and body to entail their sharing of these physiological characteristics, but this is not necessarily the case. Because alters in such cases have different abilities to deal with different situations, it seems plausible to deem them different centres of action.

What about will? In support of the Single Person thesis, one might refer to claims that different alters can share the same aims and functions.³³ However, there are cases that imply that their wills can differ. Alters often vie for control of the body and sometimes negatively intervene in the lives of other alters by destroying possessions, interfering with diets, and other such things.³⁴ They are capable of sabotaging one another, which implies that in some cases they are distinct centres of will.

The last criterion left to consider is love. There are points previously made that seem to support the claim that alters are distinct in this regard. The fact that the memories and experiences some alters have lack a sense of ownership when acquired by other alters is relevant here. This may include memories of relationships. A memory of a first kiss, or a wedding, may not evoke the same feelings for other alters because they do not see such experiences as theirs.

³⁰ Maiese (2017), 766–767.

³¹ Braude (1995), 48.

³² See Braude (1995), 49, for this point and some studies justifying it.

³³ Güell et al (2017), 110.

³⁴ Maiese (2017), 776.

Moreover, if alters are capable of sabotaging each other when it comes to attaining particular goals, it seems conceivable that they could do so with relationships as well.

A case study can provide further justification here. John Woods was a DID sufferer who, whilst a college student, killed his girlfriend and her flatmate after an argument over his girlfriend's unfaithfulness. There were three alters. John was referred to as the host alter, and appeared as friendly, depressed, and amnesic. There was also Donnie, who appeared adolescent-like, naïve, and intellectually curious. The alter in control when the murders occurred, Ron, was aggressive and verbally limited.³⁵

In an interview, Ron claimed to love John like a brother because John needs him, suggesting that alters are capable of loving one another. Furthermore, he also claimed that 'he sees himself as different from John and Donnie, both of whom like people. He does not like to be around people since "they turn evil."³⁶ Here, we have a case in which alters differ in their feelings towards others. This suggests that they can be different centres of love.

Here, it has been shown that there is good reason to think that alters in certain cases can be deemed different persons according to the Different Centres definition. They can differ significantly in the knowledge they possess, and even when the boundaries are less defined there is reason to think that they are still distinct centres of knowledge. They can have different abilities and traits, can differ in their relationships with others and can even compete amongst themselves for control of the body. This suggests that it is possible for alters to be different centres of knowledge, love, will, and action. Therefore, it seems that at least in some cases, the alters of DID sufferers are different persons.

The I-Thou Definition

An alternative definition of persons is the I-Thou definition. Here, the focus is on the relationality of persons, and they are defined as beings that are capable of uttering the word 'I' and being addressed as 'Thou'.³⁷ Encounter with the other, the thou, is what is fundamental to being a person. The relationship between subjects in such encounters must not reduce the thou to an object in the gaze of the I, and vice versa.³⁸ Can alters be considered different persons on such a definition?

³⁵ Armstrong (2001), 209.

³⁶ Armstrong (2001), 212.

³⁷ Van Inwagen (1995), 264.

³⁸ This outline is drawn from Leidenhag (2021). Leidenhag critiques the I-Thou understanding for its inability to accommodate autistic persons. This understanding of personhood originated with Martin Buber, and has been associated with other prominent theologians like Karl Barth,

It has been proposed that different alters possess a rudimentary first-person perspective, and thus have at least a minimal sense of self. They each have consciousness and see their own versions of the world as real.³⁹ They can also be rationally engaged as if they are different persons with different points of view.⁴⁰ Moreover, it has already been noted that when one alter acquires the memories and experiences of another, they do not come with a sense of ownership. This suggests that alters may view themselves as different selves, and others can engage with them as such. However, due to the relational nature of the I-Thou definition, we need more information about how alters interact when investigating the viability of the Multiple Persons thesis here.

A useful case study for this discussion is that of Eve, outlined by O'Kelly and Mackless:

[A] demure, retiring individual, Eve White was quiet, industrious, and, as . . . [her therapists Thigpen & Cleckley] . . . put it "in some respects almost saintly." During the course of therapy . . . [Thigpen & Cleckley] . . . were led to suspect the existence of another [alter] personality . . . This new personality, Eve Black, had been co-existing with Eve White since childhood . . . Eve Black's behaviour was the opposite of White. Black was shrewd, rowdy, and provocative; she enjoyed joking and pranks. Uninhibited and frank, Black lived for the moment. Furthermore, Black was aware of the existence of White while Eve White knew nothing of her other personality. Black delighted in placing Eve White in embarrassing positions: "When I go out and get drunk" . . . Eve Black once said . . . "She wakes up with the hangover. She wonders what in the hell's made her so sick."⁴¹

The way Eve Black acts so as to put Eve White in compromising positions resembles the way two people would interact in a particularly negative relationship. Eve Black acts as if Eve White is a different person and gets enjoyment out of seeing her placed in embarrassing situations. Imagine that at t_2 , Eve Black takes control, and travels back in time to a period in which Eve White was in control, and they encounter each other. Due to the way in which they interact whilst in the same body, it seems likely that they would not view each other as the same person, and would not refer to one another as 'I', but as 'Thou', as indicated by Eve Black's use of the pronoun 'she' in reference to Eve White.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Wolfhart Pannenberg, among others. See Leidenhag (2021) for further discussion.

³⁹ Güell et al (2017), 110.

⁴⁰ Rovane (1998), 170.

⁴¹ O'Kelly and Mackless (1956), 27. This example was brought to my attention by and quoted in Kennett and Matthews (2002), 510.

This particular case suggests that it is possible for alters to be different persons according to the I-Thou definition.

This conclusion is reinforced by the fact that we can have alters that differ in things like gender and age, and that when there is a switch from one alter to another, this is accompanied by differences in facial expressions, voice quality, posture, speech patterns, bodily movements, and so on.⁴² Moreover, there are cases in which covert alters (those not in control of the body) are said to have a council meeting so that they can supervise the emergence of the various alters and ensure that their needs are met; that the child gets to play with their toys, the artist gets to paint, and so on.⁴³

These points suggest that in some cases alters can be considered different persons according to the I-Thou definition. The variations in things like facial expressions and speech patterns suggest that different alters interact differently with other people they encounter in the world when in executive control of the body. Moreover, in the council meeting example they meet and negotiate together to make sure that provisions are made for each of them when they are in control of the body. They consider the desires of each identity, and make sure that they are fulfilled. They seem to treat one another as distinct individuals, again suggesting that in such cases alters can be deemed different persons when the I-Thou definition is adopted.

2. A New Problem for Heaven and Hell

The previous section has not conclusively established the Multiple Persons thesis. Instead, I sought to show that on some definitions of personhood in Christian theology, alters appear to be different persons at least in some cases of DID. Even if true only in some cases, the Multiple Persons thesis has some unwelcome implications for traditional Christian conceptions of the afterlife.

Before addressing this, it is important to note that its consequences extend outside of the Christian tradition. It prompts questions of whether alters should vote separately, whether one alter can justifiably be punished for the crimes of another, whether forms of therapy that eradicate all alters aside from the alter seen to be the host can be considered an act comparable to murder, and so on.⁴⁴ The interpretation of alters as different persons thus has wide ranging normative implications.⁴⁵ Here, my focus shall remain on the theological implications.⁴⁶

⁴² Braude (1995), 42–43.

⁴³ Braude (1995), 44.

⁴⁴ See Sinnott-Armstrong and Behnke (2000), 305–306, for these and other examples.

⁴⁵ Rovane (2004), 186–187.

⁴⁶ I recognise that speculations about the afterlife are strongly influenced by the political and social concerns, as well as the normative speculations, of the time (Moss (2019), 7–11), so these

To begin our discussion of the afterlife, we must consider whether alters can differ as to whether they have faith. For this, an understanding of how someone comes to faith is required. I recognise that the grace bestowed on those that attain salvation is unearned, and must be so to avoid Semi-Pelagianism.⁴⁷ This means that individuals cannot desire grace or will the good themselves, but accounts trying to reconcile this with free will claim that individuals must at least refrain from resisting God's grace to be saved. Working out how this can occur whilst avoiding Semi-Pelagianism is no easy task, and it is not one I shall attempt here. However, since such discussions focus on what the will is or is not doing, one can infer that the will has a role in one's coming to faith.⁴⁸

As has already been argued, alters can differ in what they will. It is clear from the examples noted that alters can differ in their desires, and these differences are so significant that it can result in conflict, or in one alter trying to sabotage another. It thus seems conceivable that they can also differ on whether they are resistant to God's grace, and, as a result of this, on whether they have faith.

Furthermore, as suggested in the previous section, it seems that alters can differ in their beliefs about, attitudes toward, and relationships with other people. For example, in the John Woods case, Ron seemingly had a different belief about people to the other alters, John and Donnie, namely the belief that people "turn evil". This impacted both his attitudes towards others and the kind of relationships he had with them.

Due to this, one might suppose that alters can differ in their attitudes toward and beliefs about God as well. One alter may have a belief that God might be real or an attitude of curiosity towards God that prompts them to refrain from resisting God's grace and come to faith. The other might be a rigid atheist, harbouring the belief that God's existence is impossible, and could thus continue resisting God. Such a scenario further suggests that an alter could have faith whilst another alter, in the same body, does not.

If we have multiple alters, or persons, who share the same body, what happens after death? One might think that additional alters can simply be destroyed, but there are two reasons that suggest this is problematic. Firstly, here we have argued that they may be persons with moral status, and if this is not how God ordinarily treats persons after death (as we are assuming here), this should not

issues are not totally divorced from one another. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for suggesting this.

⁴⁷ The fact that grace is unearned plays a key role in the problem of religious luck outlined in Zagzebski (1994).

⁴⁸ For understandings of salvation in which the will plays a role by refraining from resisting grace see Stump (2001) and Timpe (2014). One might point to predestination as an alternative, but this would seem to make the heaven and hell understanding completely unjust. Scholars can adopt universalism as a way around this. See, for example, Baker (2003). However, this is not the understanding of the afterlife being considered here.

be the case with alters.⁴⁹ Secondly, if none of the alters can be considered to be truly primary, it is not even clear which alters could be selected for annihilation. Getting rid of all of the alters except one does not seem to be a plausible option.

If the alters were given separate bodies, this violates the same body thesis. If, on the other hand, they continue sharing the same body, the heaven and hell view faces substantial difficulties.⁵⁰ Say, for example, that in a case in which there are two alters sharing the same body, one had faith and the other did not. One of the alters might end up being punished or glorified for the faith or lack thereof of the other, which is problematic.

These thoughts can be constructed into a formal argument. I shall label the argument the DID argument against heaven and hell, or the DID argument for short, and it runs as follows:

1. A person cannot be saved (sent to heaven) or damned (sent to hell) due to the faith, or lack thereof, of another non-divine person.⁵¹
2. The alters in some cases of DID are different persons.
3. Therefore, in such cases an alter cannot be sent to heaven or hell due to the faith or lack thereof of another alter (from 1 & 2).
4. Alters share the same body.
5. Given the same body thesis, alters that shared a body before death must be resurrected in the same, shared body.
6. It is possible for one alter to have faith whilst another alter in the same body does not.
7. Bodies are either glorified and sent to heaven for eternity at the resurrection, or they are damned and sent to hell for eternity.
8. Because an alter can have faith whilst another alter in the same body does not and bodies are either sent to heaven or hell for eternity, it is possible for an alter to be sent to heaven or hell because of the faith or lack thereof of another alter (from 5, 6, & 7).⁵²
9. Therefore, the heaven and hell understanding, in allowing alters to be saved or damned as a result of the faith, or lack thereof, of another alter, is implausible.

⁴⁹ A similar issue arises from certain treatments of DID. See Bayne (2002).

⁵⁰ Even if one accepts the Single Person thesis, there is still an issue with criminal responsibility in cases of DID, especially in cases where one alter lacks the control required to prevent a crime committed by another alter. See Deeley (2003).

⁵¹ I have qualified this statement because faith is largely the work of God.

⁵² This is even the case if one adheres to the idea of the intermediate state, in which believers are said to reside in a disembodied, paradisaical state between death and the resurrection of the body. The problem would still arise at the resurrection when, due to their sharing of the same body, the alter with faith is consigned to hell or the alter without faith granted access to heaven. See Turner (2014), 406–407, for a summary of this doctrine.

I take it that premise 1 is fairly intuitive. If faith is both necessary and sufficient for a person to ascend to heaven, there should not be people lacking faith that are able to enter heaven or those with faith that are consigned to hell. I thus take premise 1 to be uncontroversial. Premise 2 has been discussed in the previous section and is being assumed here. Premise 3 follows straightforwardly from 1 and 2, and premise 4 is again uncontroversial. Premise 5 is entailed by the same body thesis, which is being assumed here. Premise 6 has been argued for earlier in this section.

Premise 7 might initially seem odd in its formulation, as the term ‘bodies’ has been used instead of the term ‘persons’. This formulation is appropriate, however, as heaven and hell are typically seen to be places where their residents reside for eternity. Given this and the same body thesis, alters that shared the same body before death must reside forever in the same place in the afterlife, which is problematic if one of the alters had faith and the other did not. Either one is wrongly granted access to heaven, or the other is wrongly consigned to hell. Premise 8 and the conclusion follow naturally from the previous argument. Now that we have an outline of the DID argument, we can consider some objections.

3. Responses

Although the DID argument presents a difficult problem, its premises can be questioned. It is worth noting that one could evade the problem entirely by denying either the same body thesis or the heaven and hell understanding of the afterlife. The former route is available on some views of personal identity, such as forms of dualism in which persons are immaterial souls that can survive without bodies.⁵³ The latter option could be taken by those who endorse universalism, in which all are saved, or annihilationism, in which the damned are simply annihilated.⁵⁴ Perhaps those that endorse views such as dualism, universalism, or annihilationism, may even point to the DID argument in support of their views.⁵⁵

However, given the fact that this argument is targeted specifically at views incorporating the heaven and hell understanding and the same body thesis, I shall focus on responses that accommodate these ideas. In this section, I shall

⁵³ For such a view, see Swinburne (1996). Another option here is Lynne Rudder Baker’s constitution view, in which humans must be embodied but, since their first-person perspectives are what is essential for personal identity, they do not need the bodies they currently have. See Baker (2001) and Baker (2007). For a critique of the view, see Buckareff and Van Wagenen (2010).

⁵⁴ For an overview of the debate on universalism, see Walls (2010), 242–248.

⁵⁵ I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for raising this point.

consider the different responses one might raise to the DID argument, and shall highlight the solutions that seem to be the most convincing.

Issues With the Definitions

In the philosophical literature on DID, Walter Sinnott-Armstrong and Stephen Behnke have raised an interesting response to the Multiple Persons thesis. They note that the idea that a person 'is rational, the subject of intentional predicates, a moral object, a moral subject or agent, a language-user, and the possessor of a special kind of consciousness (or self-consciousness)', could be used to argue in favour of the Multiple Persons thesis. All these features can be had by different alters, suggesting that they are different persons.⁵⁶

However, they suggest that this argument is unsuccessful. They point out that the different alters could plausibly be deemed to meet these criteria because the persons of whom they are a part of meet them whilst those alters are in control. These criteria do not distinguish between persons, but distinguish persons from things that are not persons. The Single Person thesis is thus not ruled out by such definitions.⁵⁷

Does this argument work with the definitions considered earlier in this paper? Let us start with the Different Centres definition. The emphasis in this definition on persons being *distinct* centres of knowledge, love, will and action, suggests that this would not work here. This definition does not just tell us what persons are; it also states how one can distinguish between different persons. If the argument made earlier in this paper is correct, alters can be considered different persons in some cases on this definition.

Similar conclusions can be reached with regards to the I-Thou definition. Again, one can infer from it how one can make such distinctions. One can claim that different persons would view themselves as I's, and others as thou's. As previously established, there are cases of DID in which alters seem to treat other alters as thou's, and not I's, implying that they are different persons. Sinnott-Armstrong and Behnke's argument does not seem to help here.

Escaping Heaven and Hell

There are other areas of the argument that one might target. One could, for example, claim that when the righteous alter is in control, they exist in heaven, but they are miraculously transported from heaven to hell when the damned alter is granted control of the body. This objection is aimed at premise 7, as it entails that the body is not restricted to either heaven or hell forever.

⁵⁶ Sinnott-Armstrong and Behnke (2000), 306.

⁵⁷ Sinnott-Armstrong and Behnke (2000), 306–307.

Such a position is not unprecedented. In the analytic literature on hell, the problem of hell has become a key topic of discussion. Originally formulated by Marilyn McCord Adams, the problem of hell is a variant of the problem of evil that claims that an omnipotent, omniscient, omnibenevolent God would desire to avoid a scenario in which some persons are consigned to hell forever. This makes the doctrine of hell problematic.⁵⁸

In response to this, the idea of post-mortem conversion, or escapism, has been proposed. This would grant persons lacking faith with opportunities to convert in the eschaton, which would hopefully allow most, if not all, of hell's residents to convert and escape.⁵⁹ This position could be used to object to premise 7, as it entails that people do not have to be consigned to one of heaven or hell forever. Once the righteous, or damned, alter, takes executive control of the body from the other, they could be transported to the other realm.

For this argument to work, we also need heaven to be escapable as well, and there are good reasons to think that heaven is not escapable. Benjamin Matheson has argued that it would be impossible for persons in heaven to reject their relationship with God and leave. This is because God would commune with persons in the greatest possible place. Since they would be communing with the greatest possible being in the greatest possible place, it is not psychologically possible for persons to leave heaven as they would not be able to consider or imagine leaving such a place.⁶⁰ This would render this solution implausible.

Even if Matheson's argument is sound, it does not seem to apply in our case. The problem is generated by the fact that alters can have different relationships with God despite being in the same body. They would not have the same psychological profiles. The alters without faith could not suddenly reject heaven and a relationship with God because they have not obtained these in the first place.

Despite this, there are still issues with this solution. In cases of DID, alters can have continued existence whilst not in executive control of the body.⁶¹ Imagine that an alter with faith continued to exist whilst the alter without faith is in executive control and is experiencing torture in hell. Certainly in the case of a charitable alter, as the righteous alter inevitably will be, they will feel extreme distress when seeing the other alter undergo torment, even if the pain of the

⁵⁸ Adams (1993). Such sentiments are echoed in Talbott (1990). To be clear, there are other problems with hell, such as Sider's problem of vagueness which questions God's justice. See Sider (2002). Sider aims his argument at a binary conception of the afterlife in which one simply has heaven, a very good place, and hell, a much worse one, but such problems also plague other variants. See Joaquin (2019).

⁵⁹ This solution was proposed by Buckareff and Plug (2005).

⁶⁰ Matheson (2014), 201–202. Matheson also argues that the inescapability of heaven entails that hell cannot be escaped, but this is objected to in Luck (2016).

⁶¹ Braude (1995), 44.

torture is not experienced by them first-hand. They would thus suffer, despite their glorification.

One could accept this, but claim that it does not impact cases in which the alter with faith is not conscious whilst the alter without faith is enduring punishment in hell. However, this is not a sufficient response. One must remember that my claim is not that all cases of DID are problematic in this sense, but that there are cases of DID that provide this argument with justification. There are clearly cases that the escapist's solution does not accommodate.

One might counter by suggesting that God could make it so that no alter maintains consciousness in the afterlife whilst not in executive control. That way righteous alters would not have to directly witness the suffering of other alters that share their body. However, this does not seem to fully diffuse the problem. Imagine that before death, the alter with faith continued to exist whilst the one without was in control, and was aware that the alter without faith was unlikely to attain salvation. Perhaps, after blacking out and regaining executive control in heaven, they feel deep sadness in realising that the alter without faith has been consigned to hell, a sadness that is triggered each time they regain executive control. There might even be scars on the body that provide evidence of the torture the damned alter is enduring. The righteous alters still suffer, and thus there is still an issue here.

The Beatific Vision

One might use the continued existence of alters whilst not in executive control as a way of generating a new objection to the DID argument. This can be done through the beatific vision. The beatific vision is the perfect happiness that arises in heaven through the direct, face to face relationship the blessed have with God. In this state, the boundless perfection of God completely fills up one's capacities to know and love, making one satisfied.⁶²

One could claim that this could be a means through which alters without faith who continue to exist whilst not in executive control of the body can be saved. Imagine that we have an alter without faith, A1, who shares a body with an alter with faith. A1 is still conscious when the righteous alter is in control, and continues to be so in the afterlife. Imagine that A1 witnesses the righteous alter's experience of the beatific vision. To be clear, A1 would not view these experiences or the relationship with God as his, and would not be granted a relationship with God through the righteous alter's communion with God. However, there is reason to think that A1 would be saved. He would be witnessing God, and the joy and bliss that comes with communion with God. It seems implausible to think

⁶² See Morreall (1980), 29.

that A1 would be capable of continuing to reject a relationship with God when in this situation.

This solution may work in these cases, but it seems remarkably unfair. Imagine we have another alter without faith, A2, who also exists in the same body as an alter with faith but is unaware of its existence and thus does not witness its experience of the beatific vision. A2 would not be saved. A1 is granted a sure route to salvation and A2 is condemned, and the only difference between the two cases is A1's continued existence whilst the righteous alter is in executive control. This is not only unfair on alters in A2's situation, but is also unfair on all other persons lacking faith, as none are placed in such a scenario in which their rejection of a relationship with God is impossible. This solution is unsuitable.

The Healing Response

Imagine that a DID patient was undergoing therapy in order to achieve integration, and this therapy was successful. The alters are integrated such that only one personality, and thus one person, occupied the body. However, this seemingly does not have to be done in a way that annihilates all alters but one. Perhaps the person that is the outcome of this integration process is a product of all the alters, such that the alters can be considered to have fused into this person, and thus in some sense survive in them. They are not eradicated, but are integrated into one.⁶³

Such a case would not prompt issues with heaven and hell. Whether this person is sent to heaven or hell would be determined by their faith, or lack thereof. As there are no longer different alters occupying the same body, we no longer have an issue here. Furthermore, one might think that the healing of the body that occurs during resurrection would result in integration, meaning that this solution can account for cases where the patient does not attain integration prior to death as well as those in which they do.⁶⁴

However, whether this solution works in the way required is contentious. There is considerable debate as to whether disabilities must be preserved in the afterlife because it is thought by some that one eliminates the subject if one eliminates the disability.⁶⁵ If God does generate a new person in healing someone of their disability in the afterlife, this would create discontinuity between the present life and afterlife, which threatens personal identity.⁶⁶

Whether this happens with alters in this case is dependent on key metaphysical questions. When alters are integrated, one has the difficulty of

⁶³ See Bayne (2002), 97–99, for discussion of this approach.

⁶⁴ I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for raising this response.

⁶⁵ For a discussion of this claim, see Yong (2009), and for a critique, see Mullins (2011).

⁶⁶ Yong (2009), 68.

working out whether they are eliminated and replaced by a new person, or whether they jointly survive as the new person. I shall not try to provide an answer to this question here, but it is worth noting that the success of this response depends on it. If the alters are merely replaced, it seems that the subjects are eliminated with the eradication of the disorder, which would be problematic. Furthermore, resolving this debate requires understanding of what it is like to be the subject of integration. There are thus serious complications here.⁶⁷

Even if alters do in some sense survive in the person produced, there are still obstacles. In cases in which one alter has faith and another does not, what happens with the person that is the product of the integration process? The person would have the non-resistance, and thus the faith, of one alter, and the resistance of another. One might think that their possession of the faith of one of the alters automatically grants them access to heaven. However, whether they can truly be said to be faithful or non-resistant would depend on whether they view the beliefs and thoughts of the faithful alter as theirs. Alternatively, before being sent to heaven or hell, perhaps this person must weigh up the beliefs and wills of the alters that produced them and decide for themselves which stance to adopt.

Answering this question again requires understanding of what it is like to go through the integration process, as one needs insight into how patients who have recovered from DID view the thoughts of the preceding alters. It is thus not straightforward.⁶⁸ Working out whether this solution actually works requires answers to some challenging metaphysical questions, and it is difficult to offer any kind of definitive assessment at this stage. I shall thus look at further alternatives.

Making the Same Body Thesis Conditional

An alternative solution is one that can be drawn from the theology of N. T. Wright. Wright moves away from the traditional understandings of heaven and hell in favour of the idea of the new creation, but the elements of his view that are of assistance can be integrated into an understanding of heaven and hell. On the new creation view, at the second coming the present world, along with the people in it, is transformed and put to rights.⁶⁹ Death itself purges all that is sinful in the person.⁷⁰ However, even here there will be judgement. At the second coming, Jesus will arrive as judge, and through his judgement God will set the

⁶⁷ Bayne (2002), 97–99.

⁶⁸ Bayne (2002), 98–99. For a case study of integration, see Rothschild (2009).

⁶⁹ Wright (2007), 142–143.

⁷⁰ Wright (2007), 170.

world right. The wicked will be put in their place and the poor and weak given their due.⁷¹

What is said to happen to those who are not righteous? According to Wright, when humans worship that which is not God, they cease to reflect the image of God as one reflects what one worships. They can continue down this road and reject all promptings to turn to God. Thus, through their own choice, after death the damned continue to exist, but they exist as creatures who are no longer human. With the death of the body in which they inhabited God's world, any hope for them is snuffed out.⁷²

Wright himself does not endorse the traditional conception of hell.⁷³ However, inspired by his idea that the death of the body comes with the snuffing out of hope, we can formulate a conception of hell in which those without faith survive but are not re-joined to their bodies at the resurrection. This can be used as a response to the DID argument. One can make the same body thesis conditional by suggesting that only those with faith are resurrected with the same bodies they had before death, and those without faith are not.⁷⁴

This helps us avoid the problem. Because only the righteous are resurrected in their bodies, there would be no scenarios in which alters without faith are granted access to heaven or alters with faith consigned to hell. This alternative understanding of the afterlife prevents the problems caused by some DID cases, and accommodates the same body thesis.

Different Meanings of 'Same Body'

There is another response available that does not conditionalize the same body thesis like the previous one does. It relies on an alternative understanding of what is meant by 'the same body'.⁷⁵ One could claim that alters could retain the bodies they had before death whilst still having different bodies from one another in the afterlife. How would this work? One could deny that the body that people are resurrected with is the body they had when they died, and instead claim that the body is constituted of the matter that was part of their body at some point during their lives.⁷⁶ Perhaps after death, God can provide different bodies for alters made up of matter that was part of their body at some point during their lives.

⁷¹ Wright (2007), 137.

⁷² Wright (2007), 182–183.

⁷³ Wright (2007), 182–183.

⁷⁴ The idea that, through their own free choice, some humans can reject God entirely and cut themselves off from him forever seems reminiscent of the moderately conservative theism rejected in Talbott (1990), 34–39. Although this solution works in resolving issues caused by some DID cases, I recognise that it may have other undesirable consequences.

⁷⁵ For an overview of different understandings, see Strickland (2010).

⁷⁶ Strickland (2010), 169–170.

How could this matter be divided up? As previously mentioned, in some cases of DID alters sometimes claim to have continued existence whilst not in executive control of the body. In fact, an alter is seemingly able to influence the behaviour and subjective experience of the subject even when it is not in executive control. They can induce hallucinations, interfere with behaviour, prevent the subject from acting and speaking, and cause the subject to display peculiar reticence and hesitations.⁷⁷

This is significant for our discussion, as it suggests that the body does not really completely belong to an individual alter at any point in time. Even when an alter is in executive control, it is still possible for others to influence the behaviour of the body. However, this is not an issue. Since the body belongs to all of the alters in a sense, we can say that God could create separate bodies for them after death made from matter that constituted the body they shared prior to death. Since such bodies can be formed from matter constituting the body at any time during their lives, God could make a body for each alter. Here, there would be no issue with one alter going to heaven and another going to hell, as after death, they would not share the same body. Again, this accommodates the same body thesis, but it does not conditionalize it in the way that the previous solution does.

Conclusion

In this discussion, it has been shown that DID can be of considerable consequence in theological debates. If the Multiple Persons thesis is true in at least some cases, one has difficulty adhering to the heaven and hell understanding of the afterlife whilst holding the same body thesis, and both of these doctrines have proven influential in the Christian tradition.

After outlining DID, I concluded that in some cases, alters appear to be different persons according to two definitions of personhood in Christian theology: the Different Centres definition and the I-Thou definition. Next, assuming that the Multiple Persons thesis is true in some cases, I produced an argument that showed that it is possible for some alters to be wrongly granted access to heaven or wrongly consigned to hell, questioning the plausibility of these doctrines. Finally, I considered some potential responses and concluded that advocating a conditional form of or altering one's understanding of the same body thesis are the most plausible ways around the problem.

To be clear, this discussion has limitations, and there are other ways of evading the Multiple Persons thesis that I have not considered here. One might opt for a different definition of personhood that allows one to avoid the Multiple Persons

⁷⁷ Braude (1995), 44.

thesis entirely. There are also plausible ways around the same body thesis, such as dualism. Alternatively, one could reject the heaven and hell conception of the afterlife in favour of alternatives, such as universalism, annihilationism, or the new creation view.

Such arguments would not detract from, but actually display, the significance of this discussion. It has been shown that the Multiple Persons thesis, even if only true in some cases, can have serious implications for our assessment and understanding of prominent Christian doctrines and, if it is something one wishes to avoid, the desirability of certain definitions of personhood. If one opts for an understanding of personhood that does not entail the Multiple Persons thesis or rejects the doctrines impacted by it, one has accepted the noteworthiness of DID in theological debates. Thus, even with this caveat in mind, this discussion still illustrates the relevance of DID for Christian theology.⁷⁸

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⁷⁸ I am indebted to Joanna Leidenhag, Preston Hill, Jason Stigall, and three anonymous reviewers for their feedback on earlier drafts of this paper and discussion of the topics contained within.

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