

David hershenov's model of resurrection



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In this paper, I will begin by explaining what the doctrine of resurrection is and what dilemma it entails. From this, I will present David Hershenov's model of resurrection. This, he believes solves the dilemma of resurrection. He argues that we can tolerate gaps in our existence. I will exhibit his thought experiments to illustrate his claims. Finally, I will demonstrate a serious threat to his model which I argue shows that his model doesn't solve the problem of resurrection rather it raises more concerns on the basis of our matter overlapping with everyone else's.

First, I will explain what the doctrine of resurrection involves. This is the idea that life doesn't end at bodily death. The claim is that there is quantitative identity, meaning that it's the body that you have now with all the aches and pains is the body that will be resurrected.

However, the doctrine entails a dilemma, how can God resurrect a dead body? In at least some cases the death of someone is difficult to imagine a person is being resurrected for instance if the body is burned or chopped to pieces. The issue is that it's the earthly body that is resurrected but the earthly body is disease ridden, so how on earth is God going to resurrect that exact physical stuff?

In order to present David Hershenov's solution to this dilemma, I will demonstrate his challenge to Peter Van Inwagen's claim. Hershenov wants to challenge Van Inwagen's claim that if God resurrects the scattered matter of a destroyed body for example, reassembling the ashes from cremation, the resurrected human would not be the human that had died but rather a duplicate (Hershenov, 2003, 24) On Van Inwagen's account, at the moment

we die, God replaces the newly dead body with a simulacrum and stores the preserved body somewhere for the resurrection. If the body is destroyed and even if the matter is collected up, this would be a duplicate. Even if made up of the same matter this doesn't guarantee identity. This has God involved in body snatching. (Hershenov, 2003, 25)

Hershenov delivers a new view which avoids Van Inwagen's systematic body snatching. He provides a defence of a reassembly account. In his new view, we have to give up the idea that causal origins matter for identity, instead what matters is the assimilation of parts. This is the idea that as long as we are made of the same matter, it then doesn't matter if our existence contains gaps; that you were destroyed then resurrected. It can be consistent for us to come in and out of existence. In other words, he believes that the body can be disassembled then put back together and remain the same body as long as it picks up just where it left off. According to Hershenov, the doctrine of resurrection only worries us because we see corpses being destroyed. However, we can tolerate "gappy" (Hershenov, 2003, 26) existence for identity as long as we are made of the same stuff. To illustrate, he presents some thought experiments.

To initially exemplify, he provides the analogy of a gun, which can be disassembled into separate parts and then reassembled by the owner after a period of time. Hershenov thinks that our intuitions would sustain that the recently reassembled gun is the same gun as the before disassembled gun. Due to these intuitions, the gaps in the entity's existence cannot pose as a threat to identity claims. (Hershenov, 2003, 26)

To further illustrate our intuitions, he asks us to conceive of an invitro fertilisation lab. In the actual world (W1) on January 25th, 1998 at midday X was fertilized in a petri dish. The idea is, could it have been the case that in World 2 (W2) X was fertilized instead at 1pm? Our intuitions are supposed to think sure why not, if we hold everything constant then it could have equally turned out to be X. So, the same X that might have originated at midday in W1 could have come into existence at 1pm in W2. Now in World 3 (W3) the embryo X is indeed created at midday, it is exactly the same as in the actual world. However, the embryo then is destroyed in an instance after it was created. For instance, the petri dish is dropped. The lab technician then reassembles the stuff back together and does the process again at 1pm like in W2. In this case, can this still be the embryo that becomes X. We are supposed think yes. If our intuitions say yes, then it is proven that identity can tolerate a gap in existence and destruction of the thing. (Hershenov, 2003, 30)

Hershenov argues that if we agree with the above case, this is equally what resurrection is like. If we think the petri dish case is acceptable and we still get X in World 3 then we have already accepted that the thing can be destroyed, have a gap in its existence, be reassembled back into existence and still be the same thing. This case maps onto resurrection, if we can tolerate destruction in the petri dish cases then there is no problem of resurrection after all. (Hershenov, 2003, 30) What's important for Hershenov, is that identity is secured by individuals constituting the same matter. As long as you have secured the matter that constitutes you, then you can have resurrection.

I will now present how Hershenov's identity claim leads to a greater issue. If we conceive of two individuals, let's say one is a cannibal and the other the cannibal's victim. They seem to be composed of the same matter. At their parallel deaths, how can God resurrect the both of them since the matter they are composed of seems to have two equal candidates for it? It would appear that God would not be able to resurrect both of the individuals.

This much greater issue presents itself in the cannibal case. The issue is that the nature of resurrection requires that many different individual's matter will be comprised in multiple bodies so inevitably it will be in multiple places at once. This poses a serious threat to Hershenov's model as how would an individual's identity be secured if they're made up of multiple people's matter? Surely it is impossible to resurrect everyone so the reassembly view doesn't work.

Organ donation is another case which adds further difficulty. If X's heart failed and then was donated a heart from Y, X then shares matter with Y. What would happen in the resurrection of X and Y? However, I anticipate that Hershenov could possibly respond, that in the case of organ donation, what God could do is give X's original heart back. Also, if someone had lost their leg and had a prosthetic leg, God "can makes new limbs for us" (Hershenov, 2003, 34) The idea is that resurrection restores you.

Nonetheless, Hershenov's model requires the same matter in order for individuals to be resurrected. However, as I have exemplified, matter isn't unique to us as we are made up of multiple people. People who die later in history, will be composed of matter that once composed people earlier in

history. For example, when X dies, X's dispersed matter is taken up by the plants and enter the food chain, this makes it inevitable that each of us contains vast numbers of matter that were once parts of people who were long dead. We could then, constitute some of the matter that made up Shakespeare? If Shakespeare were to get resurrected, would this mean that bits of individuals get taken away? How on earth is God going to resurrect everybody when everyone's materials overlap? Identity again, doesn't appear to be secure.

Hershenov briefly acknowledges this problem and attempts to solve it by answering that “ we cannot all be resurrected at the same time” (Hersehnov, 2003, 34) The issue of shared matter only prevents God from instantaneously resurrecting everyone, instead staggered resurrection would happen. In staggered resurrection, the individuals who shared the same matter at their deaths, God could first resurrect one of them. Once this resurrected body had removed the needed matter. God could then use that same matter to resurrect the next person in line. On the other hand, this just seems to contradict God's nature. It seems strange that there would be restrictions that constrain God to stagger resurrections in this way. Why wouldn't God be able to raise all humans from out of the ground as He chooses? Thus, Hershenov's attempted solution now creates a problem surrounding God's nature.

Concluding, Hershenov's model doesn't solve the problem of resurrection. I have exhibited Hershenov's attempted solution to the problem of resurrection. To illustrate his claims, I presented his thought experiments that are supposed to appeal to our intuitions, that we can tolerate gaps in <https://assignbuster.com/david-hershenovs-model-of-resurrection/>

our existence. However, I have presented the detrimental problem of matter sharing. Although Hershenov tries to resist this threat with the answer of staggered resurrection, I have shown that this doesn't work because it contradicts with God's nature.

Bibliography:

- Hershenov D (2003) *The Metaphysical Problem of Intermittent Existence and the Possibility of Resurrection* , Faith and Philosophy, Volume 20 Issue 1 pp. 24-34