

# Theories of resurrection of the body are logically incoherent essay sample

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Resurrection is a Christian, materialist view that the body rises after death in a physical form, with the main evidence of this being the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Resurrection is central to the Christian faith as it marks the start of Christianity from the Jewish scriptures. There are many differing views about the plausibility of resurrection. Some may believe that resurrection is only based on theories, therefore not proved beyond doubt, and that these theories don't make sense. Hard materialists such as Hume will support this view, saying that death is the end and the decomposing body is evidence of that.

However this opinion may not necessarily be true. The base of many theories of resurrection is the bible, which suggests that talk of physical resurrection of Jesus is logical as there is recorded evidence through the accounts of Luke, Matthew, Mark and John. These accounts can be seen as evidence that theories of resurrection are logical because they are classed as eye witness accounts. Matthew reported that Jesus appeared to the disciples and said "peace be with you". They came up to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him.' (Mathew 28 V9) Mark also says that Mary saw a man in the tomb and he said ' You are looking for the Jesus of Nazarene, who was crucified.

He has risen!'(Mark 16 V6) but Mary was too scared and didn't tell anyone. Another source of evidence was Luke's statement when Jesus appeared; ' They gave him a piece of cooked fish, which he took and ate' (Luke 24 V41-43). Then finally John said Jesus appeared to Thomas, saying ' put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side' (John 20

V27). These accounts support a Christian materialist view that Jesus' resurrection was physical as he could eat, be touched, walk, speak and breathe. They are considered as evidence as they are written historical accounts. The evidence must be reliable; would they risk their lives for made up stories?

Not only is there evidence for the existence of resurrection, but the concept of it appears to make sense through John Hick's eschatological verification. John Hick formulated three points that show how something can be verified. In his conclusion he said that life after death can be verified if you are still a conscious being after death. It can never be falsified because you are dead. This theory is illustrated by what is known as 'the celestial city'. Within this story there is an atheist and a theist walking down a road. One thinks that there is a celestial city at the end and the other thinks there is nothing, they will find out which one is right at the end. The theist view will be verified but the atheist view can never be verified as they will not be conscious beings. Therefore resurrection theories are logical as they can never be proven wrong but can be proven to be true.

John Hick also formulated replica theory, as another way to prove that resurrection is logically coherent. This theory states the logical possibility of resurrection through three scenarios. He began with the idea of someone ceasing to exist and then reappearing in a different place in the world, and not making a path through the intervening space. He then moved on to imagine the same situation, but this time the person doesn't just disappear but dies, forming a replica at the moment of dying. Hick said 'once again the

factors inclining us to say that the one who died and the one who appeared are the same person would far outweigh the factors inclining us to say they are different people', suggesting that we can meaningfully call the replica the same person.

In Hick's third example he puts forward the case of someone dying only reappearing in a new world possessing the same memories, DNA and so on, again making the replica exactly the same as the original 'The divine creation in another space of an exact psycho-physical 'replica' of the deceased person'. Hick believes that a person is an 'indissoluble psychophysical being' and therefore needs another body created by God for this second world. This, according to Hick, is a bodily resurrection. He argues that this is logical as if the first two arguments are believable then the final one must be too.

St. Paul supports John Hick's theory that there is another spiritual world. He says it is a logical argument, and uses a plant as evidence. Paul said 'when you sow a seed in the ground, it doesn't sprout to life unless it dies'( 1 Corinthians V36) and 'God provides that seed with the body he wishes; he gives each seed its own proper body'( 1 Corinthians V38). Likewise with a person - it is a physical being and has the potential to become a 'mature spiritual person' in heaven in a replica form with forces from God. This new body however, is different as it is immortal, non-physical and higher up in the hierarchy below God and angels. This can be considered to be a logical conclusion as it supports the view from the bible that we are 'a little lower than angels'. It is also logical as it makes sense to suggest that a miraculous

event such as this would come from an all powerful being, and there is nothing more powerful than God. As the resurrected place is spiritual it is not subject to the laws of nature, for example aging, so it is rational to suggest that they could be eternal as the bodies are no longer in a physical world.

Swinburne provides further evidence to support the evidence of the bible as in his book 'The existence of God' he formulates the 'principle of credulity' which argues that any experience should be trusted as all religious experiences are to be taken by their subjects to be substantial grounds for belief. Therefore resurrection of Jesus is logical as the disciples' account of it is a religious experience so their accounts form a substantial ground for belief.

Swinburne would also agree with Near Death Experiences (NDE) as they form a religious experience. A Near Death Experience happens when you are about to die but manage to survive. It has been described as 'a sensation of being drawn through a tunnel-like space' and approaching a border but 'being sent or drawn back to the earthly body'. This supports spiritual resurrection. A replica of the person is formed whilst their body stays on the bed, and they are about to enter into a different world, perhaps a world of resurrected bodies. This is modern day experience of resurrection and is therefore up-to-date and more reliable, providing proof that it can happen so theories of resurrection do make sense as people have experienced part of the process.

However you could argue that NDE are not reliable evidence as they can be attributed to a change in blood pressure evoking a floating sensation or reduced oxygen to the brain causing hallucinations. Therefore there is perhaps no religious connection, only a scientific one, showing that a scientific explanation can be logical where a religious one is not. NDE could be seen as evidence for dualism, a body soul split, and not resurrection.

Although many claim that resurrection is logically possible, many suggest that the need for an all powerful being within them renders them illogical, as they do not prove that God exists. Without God resurrection could never happen as we are tied down by physical rules that keep us in place, making it impossible to rise into heaven. A major criticism is that the theories are based on something that can never be proven in this world, so you will never know if it is logical. The idea that there is no God to implement such theories can be seen through the works of Ludwig Feuerbach, Sigmund Freud, Karl Marx and Richard Dawkins as they reject religion, therefore rejecting God.

Feuerbach and Freud argued that Christianity is an invention of the human mind's 'wish- fulfilment', and that the Christian God was a projection of human wishes. Karl Marx had a different approach as he believed that religious belief was a strategy that kept poor people in their position while the wealthy exploited them - 'the sign of the oppressed creature'. Richard Dawkins believes that science disproves the existence of God as science explains how the world was formed through 'Natural selection, the blind, unconscious, automatic process which Darwin discovered, and which we now know is the explanation for existence'.

Theories of resurrection not only fail to provide a substantial base for belief, but they also defy logic in themselves, as can be seen in Hick's replica theory. One criticism of the theory is that questions are raised as to whether the replica can still be the same person if it exists in a different world. It is illogical – how can a physical form be the same as a spiritual form? Clarke also criticised the theory, saying that if Mr X can be resurrected once, can he be resurrected a numerous amount of times? If there was more than one replica of Mr X then they would be both the same person as Mr X, which is illogical. To some the theory may appear unclear, in that if God can recreate one person X, he could recreate two identical X replicas. This causes a dilemma, which one would be the real X? It defies logic.

Gilbert Ryle is a hard materialist who denies the possibility of bodily resurrection. In his book 'the concept of the mind', 1949 he argued the idea that the soul is 'a ghost in a machine'. He concluded that the soul doesn't exist and death is the end as your body rots, therefore saying that theories which say physical and spiritual resurrection occur are illogical as resurrection cannot happen, nothing happens after death.

Hume and Bultmann followed Ryle in suggesting that death is the end. Their approach to miracles underlines this opinion, as if miracles are denied then resurrection cannot be accepted. Hume defined miracles as 'A transgression of the laws of nature by a volition of deity' but suggested that they are irrational as you always come to a conclusion that the laws of nature will hold good. In nature death is the end and bodies rot, we have no reason to believe it to be otherwise. Rudolf Bultmann removed miracles when he

demythologised the bible, a process of taking things out that couldn't be proved and could be regarded as myth. Bultmann said ' For the world view of the scripture is mythological and is therefore unacceptable to modern man whose thinking has been shaped by science'. Through this, he is saying that miracles are only myths which provide no evidence in a world of science. Therefore, he suggests theories of resurrection are illogical as they have no proof because they are based on myth not science.

It is also doubtful whether or not the bible can be used as plausible evidence for resurrection on the basis of its use of language. The resurrection of Jesus appears to be spiritual, although the bible clearly says was physical. St. Paul states ' He appeared to 500 of his followers' (1 Corinthians 15 V6). The Greek word for ' appears' implies a vision, suggesting that Jesus had a spiritual, ghost-like presence rather than a physical one. This spiritual nature can also be seen in John's account, ' Together behind locked doors', ' Then Jesus came and stood among them'( John 20 V19) and Luke's account, ' suddenly the lord himself stood among them.'(Luke 24 V 36) This represents a spiritual resurrection as he suddenly appears, which is impossible for a physical being.

He is also not recognised straight away, shown in Luke's account, ' they saw him, but somehow did not recognise him'(Luke 24 V16). He does not appear to be the same as when he died therefore he cannot be in the same physical form, rather transformed and spiritual. It has also been argued that the accounts are unreliable because there is a misuse of language by using person words such as ' I' which should only be used towards physical beings



not spiritual or immaterial bodies created by God. As different conclusions can be drawn from this evidence, you could regard it as unreliable, making theories of resurrection unreliable as well because they are not based on dependable evidence.

Further confusion is raised about bodily resurrection as religions disagree, for example Jews believe that Jesus was not resurrected but was in fact taken away from the tomb by Christians to make it look like he was. The accounts in support of resurrection are also one sided and inaccurately remembered, for example Mark said that Mary was too scared to mention her experience but other accounts clearly say she told the disciples. It has also been argued through the conspiracy theory that the reports are also late, the disciples had hallucinations and that it wasn't Jesus on the cross and that was why he was seen after the event. If the only account of physical resurrection cannot be trusted, theories of resurrection cannot make sense as you could argue that may never have happened therefore it is illogical to suggest it could ever happen.

Flew, along with many logical positivists also believe that resurrection never happened or will ever happen as the language is illogical. Flew said the concept of life after death for Christians is a contradiction. He came to this conclusion in his essay 'can a man witness his own funeral?' In this essay he linked the phrase 'surviving death, and dead survivors'. He used the example of a torpedoed ship saying that the dead of the ship are exclusive from the survivors, the two cannot be together as it is not logical, it covers the two states, dead and alive, something cannot be both. Christians cannot

have a dead body and live in a spiritual world as they would cover both states, dead and alive. Logical positivists argue that language can only be meaningful if it has either internal logic, which is when something in a statement doesn't need external proof, for example a widow has lost a husband is true in itself, or if it had external, direct sense experience to verify the statement. Clearly, there is no internal logic, and direct sense experience is not possible until after death. Therefore the conclusion is that talk of resurrection is a contradiction and is meaningless therefore illogical.

Critics of bodily resurrection can be theists as well as atheists. Jenkins, the ex-archbishop of Durham, questioned the physical resurrection. He believed that the resurrection of Jesus was nothing more than a 'conjuring trick with bones'. Tension rose when he questioned the need for a literal resurrection in order to have faith. He was therefore suggesting that the resurrection of Jesus never happened and should not be taken literally. If resurrection is not literal it cannot be logical.

In conclusion theories of resurrection appear logically incoherent. You cannot make sense of it in this world as you will never experience resurrection, it is beyond the human mind to come to terms with such theories. The theories tend to be based on faith, supplying no evidence and surpassing logic. John Hick's eschatological verification is an example of this as it doesn't make sense, you are given no reason why you would experience life after death it just states the obvious. Resurrection also defies science and it is logical to follow scientific laws as we experience the laws of nature every day. We can only believe what we see, experience or have up to date accounts of, so we

cannot believe that the physical resurrection of Jesus occurred or that we can have a spiritual resurrection after death. The belief of it is based on your cultural setting you don't believe it because it is true you just believe it because it is what you have been brought up with. But when it comes down to it nobody can know for certain and therefore theories of resurrection appear illogical.