

PHIL 20203 – Death and Dying
Prof. Rhoda
Second Paper – The Possibility of Post-Mortem Survival

Format: Length *at least 3 full* pages, but *no more than 5* pages. 12 pt Times Roman. 1" margins. Double-spaced throughout. (Also, no vapid introductions! Dive right into the topic.)

References: Citations should be given for any material or ideas that you derive from course texts, my PowerPoint notes, or outside sources. Place citations in the text, formatted as follows:

(Perry, ##) – for Perry (where ‘##’ is replaced with the page range)

(H&M, ##) – for Habermas & Moreland

(PP, date) – for course PowerPoint notes

Don’t quote excessively. Where possible, paraphrase. Include a bibliography.

Due Date: Friday, March 11 by 5 p.m. You must submit *both* a hardcopy and a digital copy (MS Word format). Email the latter to me at rhoda.1@nd.edu. Hardcopies can be dropped off in the mailbox outside my office (Malloy 327).

Topic: The possibility of post-mortem survival

Background: For you to survive physical death requires that there be or come to be a *future-you*—a person (or person-stage) *appropriately connected* to your present self, the person (or person-stage) that is you-now. It also requires that that future-you be in some sense *independent* of your *present* physical body (or brain). It could perhaps involve a new physical body, a new brain, or an immaterial soul. And perhaps it must be in psychological continuity with your present self. In any case, we face problems with *duplication*. For whatever sort of future-you we might care to posit it seems that *in theory* there could come to be *more than one* person (or person-stage) with *equal claim* to be the legitimate successor of you-now. (Think here of Perry’s ‘brain rejuvenation’ scenario, brain-splitting, Star Trek-style transporter duplication accidents, God’s causing your soul to undergo amoeba-like fission, etc.)

Here’s what I want you to address: (1) Briefly distinguish between physicalist (reductive and non-reductive) and substance dualist views of human persons. (2) For each type of theory briefly describe *one* seemingly coherent duplication scenario. (3) Explain with reference to the nature of *identity* why the *mere possibility* of duplication is a threat to survival. (4) For each scenario, try to come up with a plausible and principled *argument* against the possibility of duplication. If you can, elaborate the argument. If you can’t, should we *reject* the possibility of post-mortem survival on either physicalist or substance dualist assumptions? Or is it possible to reconcile post-mortem survival with the possibility of duplication by rejecting *identity* as a condition on survival? Why or why not?

Note:

(1)–(3) are strictly textbook matters. You should be able to address them within a couple pages.

(4), however, will require you to do some serious creative thinking. You should probably devote at least one full page to it.