

# The animal, the corpse, and the remnant-person

Andrea Sauchelli<sup>1</sup>

Published online: 20 April 2016  
© Springer Science+Business Media Dordrecht 2016

**Abstract** I argue that a form of animalism that does not include the belief that ‘human animal’ is a substance-sortal has a dialectical advantage over other versions of animalism. The main reason for this advantage is that Phase Animalism, the version of animalism described here, has the theoretical resources to provide convincing descriptions of the outcomes of scenarios problematic for other forms of animalism. Although Phase Animalism rejects the claim that ‘human animal’ is a substance-sortal, it is still appealing to those who believe that our nature is continuous or of a similar kind to that of other physical entities.

**Keywords** Metaphysics · Animalism · Brain-transplant scenarios · The corpse problem · The remnant-person problem

Is ‘human animal’ a substance-sortal, that is, a sortal to which an entity belongs essentially?<sup>1</sup> Or, in less theory-loaded terms, can an entity now properly classified as a human animal be classified at a later time as something that is not a human animal and still be numerically the same entity? A negative answer to the first and a positive answer to the second of these questions provide the basis for various solutions to different problems facing animalism, or so I will argue in this paper.

---

<sup>1</sup> See Wiggins (2001) for the relevant terminology.

---

✉ Andrea Sauchelli  
andreasauchelli@ln.edu.hk

<sup>1</sup> Department of Philosophy, Lingnan University, Tuen Mun, Hong Kong, SAR

Animalism is a theory that provides an answer to the question ‘what are we?’<sup>2</sup> Although it is generally discussed in the context of theories of personal identity, animalism is not explicitly a theory about the identity of an entity *as a person*.<sup>3</sup> Rather, it is a theory about the nature of entities that happen to be, among other things, persons. Animalism is a theory about our nature that directly questions the idea that we are essentially persons. I will not here rehearse reasons to believe that (one form of) animalism is true. Rather, my aim is to formulate a version of animalism on the basis of which a convincing series of replies can be given to some of the problems facing some versions of animalism. My claim is thus conditional: if you are already persuaded that animalism is correct or plausible and that the problems discussed below are significant problems for animalism, then it is better, from a theoretical point of view, to also hold true the series of other claims specified in Sect. 2. These claims, along with the basic animalist claim that we are animals, form the core of what I call Phase Animalism (PA), a theory according to which (1) ‘human animal’ can be understood in terms of ‘human organism’ (the two expressions will be used almost interchangeably unless explicitly stated otherwise), (2) ‘human organism’ is a phase-sortal, (3) there are parcels or bodies of matter, or material objects (‘material object’, ‘body of matter’ and ‘parcel of matter’ will be used interchangeably, the latter in a sense different from that of Locke).<sup>4</sup> This version of animalism yields convincing descriptions of the outcomes of thought experiments that would otherwise threaten animalism. Among the various problems emerging from such thought experiments, I have selected the Brain-Transplant Problem, The Remnant-Person Problem, and the Corpse Problem as they are most frequently discussed in the recent literature. PA provides convincing responses to at least the last two of these problems.

The paper is structured as follows. In the first section, I discuss various versions of animalism in their classical formulations as provided by Eric Olson, Paul Snowdon, David Mackie, and others.<sup>5</sup> In the second section, I provide a systematic description of the various problems associated with popular versions of animalism. In the third section, I introduce PA and illustrate how this version of animalism can answer the problems discussed in the second section.

## 1 Animalisms and sortals

Although not all current ‘animalists’—a term that stands for ‘supporters of animalism’—clearly distinguish between modal (or essentialist) and non-modal animalism, the distinction is important. Essentialist Animalism (EA) is the view that

<sup>2</sup> See Olson (2007) for an introduction to various theories about our own nature.

<sup>3</sup> The literature on animalism has grown significantly in the past 20 years. See Blatti (2014) and Bailey (2015) for useful and compelling introductions to the topic.

<sup>4</sup> See Mackie (1976), Chappell (1990) and Ayers (1991). How the previous claims are connected will be explained in Sect. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Snowdon (1990), Olson (1997, 2004, 2013, 2015, forthcoming), Mackie (1999), Hershenov (2005), DeGrazia (2005), Johnston (2007). Many other equally interesting versions of animalism are listed in Blatti (2014) and Bailey (2015).

we are essentially (human) animals, whereas Non-Modal Animalism (NMA) is simply the view that we are (human) animals.<sup>6</sup> Both EA and NMA cannot be properly called theories unless other important details are specified. For instance, EA and NMA do not directly imply a specific conception of what an animal is. Generally, it is understood that if you are an animal, then you are also an organism. A human animal is a human organism, the precise nature and features of which is probably best left to the biological sciences to determine. Neither EA nor NMA is directly concerned with specifying the conditions that an entity must satisfy to be properly classified as a person.

Olson combines animalism with the claim that psychological continuity does not determine animal continuity through time. The resulting view is called the Biological Approach. The main rival of the Biological Approach is Psychological Essentialism (or Essentialist Psychologism, PE), the view that we are essentially psychological or mental entities. In itself, the Biological Approach is compatible with a Non-modal version of Psychologism, the view that we are psychological entities—entities that also happen to have a set of mental or psychological features. Both EA and NMA are also compatible with the view that necessarily, a person is a being with certain mental features, but they are not compatible with the view that we are essentially persons—given that persons are generally taken to be psychological entities. PE entails that if we are now persons then we must always be mental entities (entities with psychological or mental features) to be numerically the same through time.

The Biological Approach can be combined with the idea that the natural kind (if at all) ‘human animal’ is, using David Wiggins’ terminology, a substance-sortal. In this context, a sortal is way in which we identify and classify things that also provides an answer to the question ‘what is it?’<sup>7</sup> According to Wiggins, a sortal concept is a concept that, at a metaphysical level, also provides the conditions of individuation and persistence for an entity that falls under the sortal. The distinction between substance-sortals and phase-sortals is that sortals of the first kind are those sortals under which an individual falls for its whole existence, whereas the latter are those sortals under which an individual may not always fall. If we take ‘human animal’ to be a substance-sortal, then an entity rightly classified as a human animal has its conditions of identity determined by this sortal and cannot be numerically identical to an entity at a later time that does not also fall under this substance-sortal. So, a human animal A—an entity identical to a human animal at  $t_1$ —could not persist through time as the same entity if it is not a human animal at  $t_2$  and does not satisfy the conditions of identity specified by ‘human animal’. A phase-sortal such as ‘human child’ may identify an entity but does not prescribe that an entity correctly classified as a human child would cease to exist if some of its features no longer justify its belonging to that sortal. For example, a human animal may be a child and an adult at different times but can never be a non-human animal. Any

---

<sup>6</sup> Olson uses ‘accident animalism’ to label the view according to which ‘we are animals accidentally and not necessarily’ (AA).

<sup>7</sup> The relationship between sortals and identity is interestingly discussed also in Nichols (2010).

version of the Biological Approach that includes the idea that ‘human animal’ is a substance-sortal seems to imply EA: (1) I am a human animal, and ‘human animal’ is a substance-sortal; (2) a human animal cannot fail to be a human animal; (3) it is not possible for me to exist and not be a human animal, that is, I cannot exist and not be an animal, which is one way of saying that I am essentially an animal (where the kind of possibility at issue is metaphysical).

The persistence conditions of human animals do not have to be spelled out exclusively in terms of the identity conditions of *living* organisms. In fact, some animalists claim that whether a human animal persists through time depends on its “retaining (enough of) the organisation of parts that is the product of their natural biological development, and that makes them apt for life, while stopping short of saying that life itself is necessary.”<sup>8</sup> A variation on this approach may not concern the structure or organisation of the parts of the organism but simply the continuity of enough of those parts that at some earlier moment constituted a life. A version of animalism that spells out the notion of a human animal in terms of a *living* organism is a version of Living-Organism Animalism. According to this family of views, an organism ceases to exist when it is no longer alive. Although there are various ways for an animalist to deny this view and still be an animalist, I will refer to those views that deny that a human animal ceases to exist when its parts are no longer components of a life as Non-Living Organism Animalism. Unless otherwise specified, the versions of animalism discussed below are versions of Living-Organism Animalism.

## 2 Animalism and its problems

Animalism has various problems, including the Brain-Transplant Problem, the Corpse Problem, and the Remnant-Person Problem.

### 2.1 The brain-transplant problem

The Brain-Transplant Problem is generated by the alleged incompatibility of animalism with Brain-Transplant Intuition<sub>1</sub> and Brain-Transplant Intuition<sub>2</sub>. These recurring intuitions are prompted by some (outcomes of) versions of the Brain-Transplant Scenario. One version of the Brain-Transplant Scenario is as follows: suppose that a scientist removes the brain of the human animal A generally associated with person PA. The scientist then places the brain into the body of the human animal B generally associated with person PB (suppose that B’s brain has been previously removed). B’s brain is then transplanted into A. Suppose that in both cases, what is transplanted is enough to generate certain forms of higher cognitive functions generally associated with personhood—a significant amount of memories, character traits, desires, etc. Such transplants are performed in a way that does not interrupt the lives of animals A and B. For instance, their brainstems,

<sup>8</sup> See Mackie (1999: 236). This view is also associated with Ayers (1991).

which are generally responsible for continuous biological functioning, are not transplanted. After the operation, there is an animal that has all that is required for the continuity of the same uninterrupted biological life as that had by A before the operation. The same applies to B. However, after the operation, animal A has all (or a great part) of the mental features associated with PB. For instance, if, before the operation, PB was interested in writing a book on personal identity and remembered a holiday in Japan in the summer of 2007, after the operation, these features ‘belong’ to animal A. Similarly, if, before the operation, PA used to remember a holiday in Los Angeles in the summer of 2007 and was interested in writing a book on the philosophy of art, after the operation, these features ‘belong’ to B. Many people would say that PA is now associated with B and that PB is now associated with A; in other words, many people hold Brain-Transplant Intuition<sub>1</sub>: a person goes where her mental states are realised.

A second description of the Brain-Transplant Scenario is as follows: suppose that *you* are animal A and that *I* am B (compare the previous version in which only third-person references were made). If an operation is performed such that what is responsible for my memories, character, desires, etc.—say, the upper part of my brain—is transplanted into your body, then what is *me* now would be associated with (or manifested in) organism A (and vice versa). Animalism seems to contradict this conclusion. In fact, animalism implies that human animal A is still *you*, despite the brain transplant. The brain transplant is an unorthodox and extreme case of organ transplant. However, many would claim that the right description of the outcome of this version of the Brain-Transplant Scenario is that I am now where my upper brain is—that is, I should be associated with animal A. In other words, many people hold Brain-Transplant Intuition<sub>2</sub>: *I* go (am) where *my* mental states are realised.

## 2.2 The remnant-person problem

The Remnant-Person Problem is a combination of the Creation Problem and the Destruction Problem.<sup>9</sup> These two problems are generated by the alleged violation of the Creation Principle and the Destruction Principle. Some forms of animalism violate these principles when they are used to describe the outcomes of two versions of the Brain-Transplant Scenario. First, suppose that a brain-transplant operation is performed such that the part that is responsible for my cognitive faculties is kept alive and detached from my skull. The operation is performed such that there has never been an interruption of consciousness or of the capacity for consciousness generally associated with the persistence conditions of persons. Additionally, my brain is kept alive by a mechanism, perhaps a vat, that need not be described as an organism. This sophisticated vat may even allow the brain to communicate how I felt tense before the operation. It would be appropriate to describe the situation as one in which a person exists, the remnant-person.

<sup>9</sup> This formulation of the problem is mainly that discussed in Johnson (2007), Parfit (2012), and Olson (forthcoming).

The trouble for animalism(s) begins (or continues) when we consider the following question. If I am not the brain in my organism as that brain is not an animal and I am an animal, where does the remnant-person come from (if we take it to be an existing entity)? If the remnant-person existed before the operation, then too many thinkers were present before the operation (the animal and the remnant-person). This problem jeopardises, among other things, the alleged advantage that animalism has in dealing with the Too Many Thinkers problem.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, if the remnant-person had not already been there, then animalism would have been committed to the claim that the operation brings into being a new entity: the remnant-person. However, that conclusion seems incompatible with one version of the Creation Principle: you cannot bring a person into being by cutting away sustaining tissues. Given the plausibility of the principle, we need good reasons to reject it. At least, we need one theoretical solution that can accommodate the reasons behind its plausibility.

The second elaboration of the Brain-Transplant Scenario is this: suppose that the remnant-person is plugged into your organism (previously emptied of the corresponding part of your brain). Suppose that the result of the operation is a functional human organism. EA and those forms of animalism that include the belief that ‘human animal’ is a substance-sortal imply that I am not the resulting organism—since I was never the remnant-person and that the new organism is not continuous with my previous organism (or, according to animalism, not continuous with me). Moreover, the remnant-person does not become you. The question then is ‘what happens to the remnant-person when the brain sustaining it is plugged into the new organism?’ Again, animalists do not want to claim that the remnant-person would continue existing after the operation as there would be one thinker too many—the remnant-person and the organism that has received the new brain. The alternative would be to say that the remnant-person goes out of existence when it is plugged into the new organism—an equally (if not less) satisfying answer: the resulting organism would still be able to describe what I felt before the operation or its experiences as a remnant-person inside a jar. More precisely, this second answer violates the Destruction Principle: you cannot destroy a person by surrounding her with sustaining tissue. Again, this principle seems plausible, and violating it requires a careful assessment.

Violation of the Creation Principle and the Destruction Principle in such a manner constitutes the Remnant-Person Problem. This problem could be circumvented by providing different descriptions of two problematic Brain-Transplant Scenarios that are compatible with versions of animalism and with some of the beliefs that ground the Creation and Destruction Principles.

### 2.3 The corpse problem

The death of a human animal coincides with the cessation of the functioning of an organism. Living-Organism Animalism seems to imply that the corpse causally

---

<sup>10</sup> See Olson (2007: 29–37), in particular, 35–7.

connected to me (as an organism) is not me. In other words, when I die, a human animal dies, ceases to exist, and thus is not the remnant or remaining corpse. According to some versions of Living-Organism Animalism (at least those not correctly classified as forms of PA), when I die, I am annihilated and I do not survive as a corpse. There is no such an entity as a human animal that later becomes a corpse. One variation on this idea is the Termination Thesis.<sup>11</sup> Those who believe that we are human animals and that these human animals cease to exist when they die are Annihilationists. There are various views inconsistent with Annihilationism, among them the thesis that we survive as corpses. One way of claiming that we survive as corpses is by saying that we are human animals and that human animals do not cease to exist when they die. In other words, we can be Non-Living Organism Animalists.

The Corpse Problem is a problem principally for Living-Organism Animalism.<sup>12</sup> The problem (or puzzle) lies in explaining where the entity that is a corpse comes from, that is, we must provide an adequate metaphysical account of the existence of the entity that is a corpse (if it is an entity at all). Suppose that there is a corpse of a human animal in front of you. How did it come into existence? Did this entity exist before the animal's death, for instance as an entity composed of the same matter as the previously living animal? An affirmative conclusion would imply that before the animal's death, there were two entities where we previously thought there was only one. This solution violates the No Dead Animal Intuition—the matter composing an animal that is alive does not also compose an appropriately related dead animal (at the same time). Alternatively, we may say that the animal's death brings the corpse into being, so killing an animal would be one way of creating a new entity, namely the corpse. This 'corpse creationism' (Olson's label) seems to violate the Corpse Creation Intuition—an event in which there is one entity, a human animal, that dies does not seem to also generate, by virtue of such a death, a new entity out of the remains of the animal. This intuition seems to be rooted in our experience and common sense: when an animal dies in front of our eyes, we do not witness a creative process by which a new entity comes into being. Rather, we perceive a (perhaps radical) change in the matter that composed a human animal. Given that Living-Organism Animalism may have to violate at least one of these intuitions, it has a problem—the Corpse Problem.

### 3 Phase animalism

Let us now explore the consequences of accepting the idea that 'human animal' is not a substance-sortal but rather a phase-sortal. A version of animalism according to which 'human animal' is a phase-sortal is a version of Phase Animalism. Phase Animalism can be combined with other versions of animalism. For instance, a Living-Organism version of NMA is compatible and can be combined with the

---

<sup>11</sup> See Feldman (1992: 89) and Feldman (2000).

<sup>12</sup> See Hershenov (2005) for a lengthy discussion of the same problem along different lines.

claim that ‘human animal’ is not a substance-sortal. According to this view, we are living organisms, but what is now a living organism may not always be a living organism. We may be numerically identical to a living organism so that when the relevant living organism ceases to exist, we do not exist anymore. However, the entity that was properly classified at some point as a living organism can become something that is not a living organism, for instance, a corpse. One way of providing a theoretical account of the metaphysical basis of such a view is as follows: there is a spatio-temporally continuous amount of matter that has a series of features. This amount of matter—call it a parcel or body of matter, or more simply a material object—is not necessarily individuated functionally but rather as an entity that has a significant spatio-temporal relation of physical continuity throughout its existence. This spatio-temporally continuous parcel of matter has features such that at certain times, it falls under functional phase-sortals such as ‘person’ and ‘human animal’.

There are many ways to clarify the synchronic and diachronic conditions of identity of this underlying body or parcel of matter (or material object). For instance, we may claim that the underlying material object is identified by a historic-dependency relation. According to this view, there is a spatio-temporal region occupied by matter and the continuity through time of this ‘body of matter’ is given by historic-dependence among particles at different times.<sup>13</sup> One proposal along these lines is that a material object  $M$  at  $t_1$  is the same material object  $N$  at  $t_2$  if a sufficient number of particles that compose  $M$  also compose  $N$  and such particles are spatio-temporally contiguous. We may even specify the expression ‘sufficient number of particles’ by saying that for instance, more than half of the particles composing the body of matter at  $t_1$  should compose the body of matter at  $t_2$ . Once we know the disposition of the relevant particles in space and time, we know all there is to know in regard to the identity of the body of matter. It is certainly possible (if we do not specify any explicit and clear-cut condition on the continuity of parcels of matter)—indeed it is desirable—that there are borderline cases. After all, this result is to be expected because we are not defining the body of matter in functional terms.

Another slightly more complex specification of the persistence conditions of a parcel or body of matters is the following. Let us define two relations, physical *connectedness* and physical *continuity*.<sup>14</sup> The first relation is the holding of particular direct physical connections (i.e., causal and/or spatio-temporal connections) between the particles that constitute the body of matter. The second relation is the holding of overlapping chains of *strong* physical connectedness. Connectedness between two parcels of matter at different times can hold to any degree, but for  $B$  at  $t_1$  and  $P$  at  $t_2$  to be the same parcel of matter, there must be sufficiently strong physical connections between the particles that compose them—that is, they must be physically continuous. Despite the gradual nature of the relation of physical connectedness, we can stipulate that a sufficient number of physical connections

<sup>13</sup> This description is supposed to be general enough to be compatible with different accounts of what ‘particle’ and ‘parcels of matter’ refer to.

<sup>14</sup> The astute reader will certainly notice a similarity with Parfit (1984/7: 206).



over 1 day is at least half the number that hold in the course of clear cases of physical continuants. This number may vary with the kind of particles that compose the parcel of matter. When there are enough direct connections, there is strong connectedness.

One version of Living-Organism and Non-Modal Animalism can be combined with the belief that ‘human animal’ is not a substance-sortal and the above notion of a parcel of matter.<sup>15</sup> Such a view can be called Non-Modal Phase Animalism (NMPA). Some of the main claims of this theory are:

1. We are human animals.
2. ‘Human animal’ is not a substance-sortal but a phase-sortal.<sup>16</sup>
3. The entity that is now a human animal may, at different times, be something that is not a human animal.

NMPA claims that what is a human animal at  $t_1$  may continue to exist and be something else at  $t_2$ . NMPA does not imply that we are essentially human animals and is also compatible with the view that, sometimes, certain human animals are persons. As a form of animalism, NMPA is compatible with the view that there are persons that are not human animals.

An essentialist version of Phase Animalism (of the Living-Organism variety) is also possible (Essentialist Phase Animalism, or EPA):

1. We are essentially human animals.
2. ‘Human animal’ is not a substance-sortal but a phase-sortal.
3. The entity that is now a human animal may, at different times, be something that is not a human animal. As we are essentially human animals, we cannot be identified with the entity that is no longer a human animal.

In the remainder of this paper, I will focus on NMPA as I think it is a more appealing version of animalism. NMPA can provide convincing answers to all of the problems that threaten other versions of Living-Organism Animalism. In more detail:

### 3.1 NMPA and the brain-transplant problem

NMPA provides the theoretical framework for the following description of the outcome of the first Brain-Transplant Scenario: after the operation, there are particles that are no longer spatio-temporally continuous in a way that would justify the belief that the same body of matter is now where the brain is—the part of the

<sup>15</sup> For expository reasons, I have chosen to focus on NMA instead of EA. However, a version of EA can be combined with the belief that animals are living organisms and the belief that ‘human animal’ is not a substance-sortal. See, for instance, the discussion of the remnant-person problem below.

<sup>16</sup> ‘Human animal’ and/or ‘person’ may also be understood in terms of *modes* of parcels of matter, the latter (parcels of matter) playing the role of ‘modified’ substances. On some interpretations of Locke’s *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* the great man took himself persons to be modes. See, for instance, LoLordo (2011). Other interpretations include those of Weinberg (2012) and Gordon-Roth (2015).

brain associated with personhood. Although there was previously only one parcel of matter, now there are two; however, one of them can be identified with the persisting organism that was alive before the transplant in the form of a functioning organism devoid of consciousness. Brain-Transplant Intuition<sub>1</sub> can be satisfied because we can describe the newly detached parcel of matter that sustained the pre-operation person as still capable of sustaining the existence of the same person before and after the operation. In other words, the new parcel of matter that is separated from what instantiates the phase-sortal ‘human organism’ is such that it can still instantiate the phase-sortal ‘person’ in a way that preserves the identity, as a person, of the person that was associated with the human organism before the operation. Thus, if the separated parcel of matter is such that the relevant conditions for personal identity are satisfied, we have all that is needed to account for Brain-Transplant Intuition<sub>1</sub>: the new parcel of matter that composes the brain sustains the same person before and after the operation. This description of the facts does not amount to a metaphysical conundrum similar to the negation of the Creation and Destruction Principles. There is no mystery in cases in which certain particles that used to compose bodies of matter are separated in space and time.

NMPA could, in principle, support a description of the second version of the Brain-Transplant Scenario that is compatible with Brain-Transplant Intuition<sub>2</sub>. In fact, it does not seem to contradict NMPA to describe the outcome of the transplant as a case in which *I* go where the relevant part of the brain goes. This situation can involve a case in which we have, at least temporarily, a non-human animal person, which is not incompatible with any version of animalism. Given that NMPA says only that I am an animal, this view seems to be compatible with the view that I can come to be an entity that is not an animal. Given its different nature, such an entity would not be entitled to use ‘we’ in the same sense in which *we* do, as though a Martian used ‘we’ to refer to itself and earthlings. However, if I were an animalist, I would not be prone to accept this description, mainly because it seems to betray the spirit of animalism. Perhaps an animalist should simply stick to the intuition behind an essentialist version of animalism and claim that after the operation, I would survive as a human animal without consciousness (provided that enough of the brain is left to keep my organism alive) and that I am no longer the same person—as the person would go where the upper part of the brain goes. If this second option is preferred, then also NMPA would violate Brain-Transplant Intuition<sub>2</sub>. This violation may be the inescapable price of animalism. As all forms of animalism seem to have this problem, the advantage of a given form of Phase Animalism seems to rest on how it addresses the two problems below.

### 3.2 NMPA and the remnant-person problem

The Remnant-Person Problem arises from the violation of the Creation Principle and the Destruction Principle in Brain-Transplant Scenarios. NMPA can provide the theoretical basis for a description of the Transplant Scenarios that does not violate these two principles. In particular, in the first problematic case—in which those parts of a brain responsible for personhood are kept alive and functioning by non-human means—an animalist of NMPA convictions has various options. For

instance, this animalist can say that the Creation Principle is based on the fact that the apparent ‘generation’ out of thin air of the remnant-person is a metaphysical mystery because this new entity seems to come into existence without an adequate explanation. However, this mystery disappears once NMPA is adopted: a parcel of matter is separated into a smaller and a bigger part, and the smaller part is arranged such that it still falls under the phase-sortal ‘person’. To the extent that this basis continues to sustain what is required for psychological continuity, the remnant-person can be the same person that was associated with the human animal that was operated on. An NMPA supporter can then say that there is no metaphysical mystery of creation *ex nihilo* here because it is a case in which the particles that made up a parcel of matter can be spatio-temporally separated and constitute different parcels of matter and objects that in turn, may fall under different phase-sortals. As there is no mystery in a case in which certain brain damages preclude psychological continuity and thus bring into existence a new post-trauma person, there is no mystery in describing the new remnant-person as a new person sustained by the reduced parcel of matter in the Brain-Transplant Scenario. The spirit of the Creation Principle would be thus respected.

Similarly, there is no mystery in the other alleged violation of the Destruction Principle if we adopt NMPA. When the remnant-person is plugged into the new animal, nothing is destroyed by being ‘fused’ into the new organism. Rather, the correct description of this event would be one involving a parcel of matter that enters into a pattern of energy- and particle-exchange by conjoining with other matter, and there is no metaphysical mystery about that. Moreover, our animalist can describe the post-operation animal as the same animal that existed before receiving the new organ. The animal that received the new brain may also display all of the features required to sustain psychological continuity with the remnant-person. In this case, the brainy parcel of matter can be properly described as being such that it is the entity that falls under a person phase-sortal. Such an entity, in turn, may also have those features that justify a judgment to the effect that the remnant-person is the same person that was previously associated with an organism. I take it that the Destruction Principle is motivated by a sense of mystery that pervades the idea that we can destroy a person merely by surrounding its physical basis with sustaining tissue. Again, in the NMPA description of the outcomes of the case at issue, there are no metaphysical mysteries but only non-metaphysically mysterious rearrangements of particles that compose objects.

### 3.3 NMPA and the corpse problem

The Corpse Problem was a problem for certain versions of animalism because some of them could not explain the origins of an entity—the corpse—when an associated organism dies. NMPA has a non-metaphysically mysterious explanation. In particular, an NMPA supporter would say that at the moment of the death of an organism, a certain parcel of matter stops having a certain internal disposition of its particles that previously placed the body of matter under the phase-sortals ‘human organism’ and ‘person’. After this change has occurred, the body or parcel of matter is now arranged in a way to be placed under the description of ‘human corpse’. No

metaphysical mystery regarding the creation or destruction of entities is involved here; we simply have the same matter, which has undergone certain internal changes such that it now falls under the concept of a human corpse. Saying that there is a corpse in front of us where before there was a human animal is just another way of saying that the parcel of matter that before fell under the phase-sortal ‘human animal’ has changed such that it now falls under the phase-sortal (or simply under the concept of a) ‘corpse’.

There can be cases in which it is not clear whether a given body of matter is still the same after its internal organisation is no longer that of a human animal. Consequently, there are cases in which it is not clear whether the same corpse still exists over periods of time. However, this is to be expected when the criteria for the identity of certain entities are given in terms of historic and causal dependency or when a specific amount of what is required for the same entity to persist is expressed in terms of chains of strong physical connectedness. If this vagueness is considered too problematic, we can stipulate precise conditions for corpse-identity over time. The main point is that there are no particular metaphysical mysteries about the existence of an entity now better described as a corpse: there was an entity composed of certain particles, that has undergone a certain amount of change such that it no longer falls under the phase-sortal ‘human animal’ but rather under the concept of a (human) corpse. In cases of particularly gory deaths involving sudden dismemberment of a human organism, NMPA can simply say that the particles that previously composed a parcel of matter no longer compose the same parcel of matter—that is, the persistence conditions of our parcel of matter are not satisfied after a death involving the sudden separation of (enough of) the particles that constitute the parcel of matter that fell under the phase-sortal ‘human organism’.<sup>17</sup>

## 4 Conclusion

In this paper, I argue that a form of Animalism (NMPA) has convincing responses to attacks on other forms of animalism on the basis of the problems discussed above. To the degree that one is convinced that we are human animals, the best thing to do, in light of the previous discussion, is to say that there is a parcel or body of matter, that ‘human animal’ and ‘person’ are phase-sortals, and that what is now a human animal may not be always be a human animal. The theoretical costs of this approach include the inclusion of a distinction between mere aggregates of particles of matter and parcels of matter intended as continuant objects extended in space and time. One alternative description of the theoretical requirements of Phase Animalism is that parcels of matter play the role of substances, whereas ‘human animal’ and ‘person’ would be modifications or ways of being that happen to apply to the underlying objects. A human animal would be a mode or way in which a parcel of matter could be. I have not offered independent arguments to support a belief in the

<sup>17</sup> Olson (2013) provides a detailed discussion of the various failed or problematic attempts of other forms of animalism to deal with gory deaths.

existence of material objects or parcels of matter apart from the theoretical advantages discussed in this essay.<sup>18</sup>

Is NMPA a form of constitutionalism in disguise? No.<sup>19</sup> NMPA does not require any modification to the understanding of animalism's main thesis; in particular, 'we are (numerically) identical with human animals' does not have to be modified in a way that would transform the 'are' of identify into the 'are' of constitution. In fact, the statement 'I am a human animal' can be understood as 'I am identical with a parcel of matter that is arranged in a way that can be described as the phase-sortal 'human animal' prescribes'. I think that this way of understanding animalism's main thesis is consistent with—, if not explicative of, the spirit of animalism. If it is objected that I used constitutionalist jargon in describing the relation between certain particles and a parcel of matter, then my defence is that being an animalist does not preclude using the concepts of 'constitution' or 'composition'. Even a supporter of EA would describe the relationship between the particles that make up her heart and her heart as a relation of composition or constitution. Thus, NMPA is no more a version of constitutionalism than are other forms of animalism.

Provided that PA has the theoretical resources to describe the outcomes of scenarios that circumvent at least some of the problems previously discussed above, other versions of animalism should be specified without the claim that 'human animal' is a substance-sortal.

**Acknowledgments** This paper was fully supported by a Grant from the Research Grants Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, China (Project No. LU23400314).

## References

- Ayers, M. R. (1991). *Locke* (Vol. 2). London: Routledge.
- Bailey, A. (2015). Animalism. *Philosophy Compass*, 10(12), 867–883.
- Baker, L. R. (2000). *Persons and bodies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Blatti, S. (2014). Animalism. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/animalism/>.
- Casati, R. (2004). Is the object concept formal. *Dialectica*, 58(3), 383–394.
- Chappell, V. (1990). Locke on the ontology of matter, living things and persons. *Philosophical Studies*, 60, 19–32.
- DeGrazia, D. (2005). *Human identity and bioethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fei, X. (1997). From Lot's wife to a pillar of salt: Evidence that physical object is a sortal concept. *Mind and Language*, 12, 365–392.

<sup>18</sup> An attempt in this direction could be an elaboration of the idea that 'object' (or 'basic object') is a sortal or a concept that provides substantial (in the sense of 'thick') principles of individuation and the specification of 'body of matter' as a kind of 'object' (or 'basic object'). Significant work on this idea has been done, with a particular emphasis on the psychological aspects of the topic, in Xu (1997). See also Hirsch (Hirsch 2011), Wiggins (2001) and Casati (2004) for some critical considerations. Another connection between what is suggested in this paper and previous influential works is that described by Strawson (1959), one of the main theses of which is that material bodies play the role of basic particulars in our conceptual schemes involving referential expressions. Nihilism about certain kinds of material objects (or beings) is discussed in Van Inwagen (1990).

<sup>19</sup> Various forms of constitutionalism are defended and discussed in Baker (2000), Johnston (2007), and Shoemaker (1999, 2011).

- Feldman, F. (1992). *Confrontations with the reaper: A philosophical study of the nature and value of death*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Feldman, F. (2000). The termination thesis. *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, 24, 98–115.
- Gordon-Roth, J. (2015). Locke on the ontology of persons. *Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 53(1), 97–123.
- Hershenov, D. (2005). Do dead bodies pose a problem for biological approaches to personal identity? *Mind*, 114, 31–59.
- Hirsch, E. (2011). 'Basic objects: A Reply to Xu', *mind and language*, 12 (1997), reprinted in *his quantifier variance and realism* (pp. 27–36). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Johnston, M. (2007). Human beings revisited: My body is not an animal. In D. W. Zimmerman (Ed.), *Oxford studies in metaphysics* (Vol. 3, pp. 33–74). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- LoLordo, A. (2011). Person, substance, mode and 'the Moral Man' Locke's Philosophy. *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 40(4), 643–667.
- Mackie, J. (1976). *Problems from Locke*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Mackie, D. (1999). Personal identity and dead people. *Philosophical Studies*, 95, 219–242.
- Nichols, P. (2010). Substance concepts and personal identity. *Philosophical Studies*, 150, 255–270.
- Olson, E. (1997). *The human animal*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Olson, E. (2004). Animalism and the corpse problem. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 82(2), 265–274.
- Olson, E. (2007). *What are we? A study in personal ontology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Olson, E. (2013). The person and the corpse. In B. Bradley, F. Feldman, & J. Johansson (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of philosophy of death*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Olson, E. (2015). Animalism and the remnant-person problem. In J. Fonseca & J. Gonçalves (Eds.), *Philosophical perspectives on the self*, pp. 21–40. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Olson, E. (forthcoming). The Remnant-Person problem. In S. Blatti & P. Snowdon (Eds.), *Essays on animalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Parfit, D. (1984/7). *Reasons and persons*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Parfit, D. (2012). We are not human beings. *Philosophy*, 87, 5–28.
- Shoemaker, S. (1999). Self, body, and coincidence. *Aristotelian Society Supplementary*, 73(1), 287–306.
- Shoemaker, S. (2011). On what we are. In S. Gallagher (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook to the self* (pp. 352–371). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Snowdon, P. (1990). Persons, animals, and ourselves. In C. Gill (Ed.), *The person and the human mind: Issues in ancient and modern philosophy* (pp. 83–107). Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Strawson, P. (1959). *Individuals*. London and New York: Routledge.
- van Inwagen, P. (1990). *Material beings*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Weinberg, S. (2012). The metaphysical fact of consciousness in Locke's essay. *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 50(3), 387–415.
- Wiggins, D. (2001). *Sameness and substance renewed*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.